

British minister starts Mideast tour

MUSCAT (AFP) — British Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett arrived here Wednesday at the start of a three-day tour to brief the region on diplomatic efforts to defuse the Iraq crisis, his embassy said. Mr. Fatchett, minister of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, was to hold talks with Omani leaders before heading for Abu Dhabi later the same day. "We were resolute in standing by our regional allies when Kuwait was invaded in 1990. [Iraqi President] Saddam [Hussein] is threatening Gulf security again," he said in a statement before his departure from Britain. "Our commitment to enforcing the international community's will is unwavering. Cooperation with our Gulf partners will play an essential part in bringing about the diplomatic solution we all want," said Mr. Fatchett, who is also to visit Egypt.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي

Mubarak warns of 'massacre'

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warned on Wednesday of a "massacre" unless Iraq complies with United Nations resolutions allowing inspections of sites suspected to house weapons of mass destruction. "If Iraq does not implement Security Council resolutions there will be a massacre," he told reporters after meeting Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sabah. "I have talked to the Iraqi foreign minister and told him that the situation is dangerous, and it is important to implement Security Council resolutions to avoid a crisis." The U.S. commander in the Gulf on Wednesday said that the U.S. was ready to strike Iraq within a week or so. Mr. Mubarak also added there were no plans for an Arab summit on Iraq at this time and no specific Arab proposal to end the crisis.

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U.S. rejects Iraqi proposal, ready to strike in a week

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Wednesday outlined proposals aimed at ending the deadlock over U.N. arms inspections as the commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf said his troops could be ready for a military strike in a "week or so."

Gulf Arab states urged Iraq meanwhile to "lift all obstacles" to U.N. weapons inspections and warned Baghdad that it will be to blame if the crisis leads to U.S. military action.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was to discuss the crisis with ambassadors of the Security Council's five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

In Cairo, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sabah outlined proposals aimed at ending the crisis sparked by Iraq's refusal to open eight presidential palaces to members of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarmament.

"We will open all these sites to a special team designated by the secretary general of the United Nations and made up of experts from the five permanent members of the Security Council and the 21 countries in the Special Commission (UNSCOM)," he said. He said UNSCOM chairman Richard Butler, vilified by Baghdad, could serve as number two to a chairman of the special committee to be appointed by Mr. Annan.

Mr. Sabah, in a slight easing of the Iraqi position, also said it would be up to the special committee to determine the length of time it needs to inspect presidential sites.

"We believe that one or two months is more than enough but this question will be left for the special committee of experts who will determine on the ground the necessary length of time," he told a news conference.

Iraq had previously insisted that inspections of presidential palaces be limited to one or two months while the United States has ruled out fixing any time frame for the U.N. weapons experts to complete their work.

But Mr. Sabah reiterated Iraqi insistence that a date be set for an end to the U.N. inspections, a demand rejected previously by the United States.

"The inspectors could visit a site once, twice or 10 times but they must wrap up their work during a determined time frame," Mr. Sabah said after more than two hours of talks here with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa.

The special committee can take samples which will be examined in UNSCOM labs," he said, adding that members of UNSCOM "would continue their work" in other non-presidential sites.



Russian ultranationalist leader and member of the Russian parliament Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, talks to the press at his arrival at Baghdad's Saddam Airport on Wednesday. Mr. Zhirinovskiy is in Iraq as a gesture of support to the Iraqi regime in its standoff with the U.N. over allowing arms inspectors into presidential sites. On the left is Iraqi Minister of Transport and Communications Ahmad Murafada (AP photo) (see story on page 12)

Mr. Sabah said opening up the eight sites was at the core of a Russian-French initiative to solve the crisis.

France described the Iraqi offer as a "step forward."

"The Iraqis are referring to eight presidential sites, this is a step forward, this is progress," French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau-Secret said.

But the United States rejected the Iraqi proposals with White House spokesman Michael McCurry saying: "It is not up to Iraq to set the conditions for the inspections."

Britain on Wednesday also responded coolly to the offer. "It is encouraging" but Iraq's suggestions "do not fulfil U.N. Security Council resolutions," said a Foreign Office spokesman.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair reiterated in parliament Wednesday that Britain was still seeking a diplomatic solution to the crisis but said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein "should not be in any doubt, and neither should anybody else, that if we are forced to take military action to bring him back into compliance [with U.N. resolutions] we will do so."

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz denied U.S. charges that Iraq was setting any conditions.

"We are ready to discuss any matter in an open-minded way," he said in an interview with the U.S. television network CNN.

Mr. Aziz said Iraq was not laying down conditions by asking Mr. Annan to form a special team to inspect the presidential sites at the centre of a crisis in which Washington has threatened to take military action.

"We are not putting conditions. We are suggesting workable arrangements," said Mr.

Aziz, in contrast to his warning in December that presidential sites would remain off-limits "forever" to arms inspectors.

But he reiterated that Iraq would not grant access to the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of its disarmament, although its inspectors could form part of the new team.

"The adversary should not be the judge," Mr. Aziz said, referring to past disputes with UNSCOM which he accused of spreading disinformation about the state of Iraq's disarmament.

In the face of the U.S. and British rejection of the latest Iraqi proposals to defuse the crisis, he did not rule out that Baghdad could be willing to improve the terms of access.

"More, I don't know. This is a very general word," he said. But "the Americans and the British are refusing [Iraq's] ideas, those reasonable ideas, those balanced ideas, because they don't want a diplomatic solution," Mr. Aziz charged.

"They are sitting waiting for us, for the Russians, for the French, and for the others, to present ideas. And then they say, 'We don't like these ideas.' This is not an honest way to reach a diplomatic solution," he said.

The United States and Britain have threatened to carry out a military attack against Iraq unless it allows arms inspectors unlimited access.

U.S. General Anthony Zinni, commander of U.S. Central Command which covers the Gulf, said Wednesday that his forces would need only about a week to be fully ready for an attack on Iraq if diplomacy fails to resolve the crisis.

"We are ready but we have a few more pieces to put in," he told reporters who accompanied U.S. Defence Secretary

William Cohen on a visit to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

"I would say we are within a week or so" of being totally ready, the Marine Corps general said. Gen. Zinni said he would be "nervous" if he were now in Mr. Hussein's place.

Apart from the George Washington, the United States has a second carrier, the USS Independence, as well as 11 other warships and more than 320 aircraft in the Gulf region.

Mr. Cohen, wrapping up a tour of Gulf allies, told sailors aboard the ship that the U.S. did not "want to resort to war unless it is absolutely necessary."

He said Tuesday that the United States would have "the strong support" of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which groups Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The leading power in the GCC, Saudi Arabia, has opposed the use of its territory — where the United States has more than 100 combat planes — to launch attacks on Iraq.

GCC foreign ministers held an emergency meeting in Kuwait City on Wednesday and urged Iraq "to respond positively to all initiatives aimed at defusing the crisis with the United Nations over disarmament, for which it puts the entire responsibility on Iraq."

They accused Iraq of "continuing in its obstinacy despite all the initiatives undertaken by Arab and international parties."

Economic sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait cannot be lifted until UNSCOM certifies that its weapons of mass destruction have been destroyed.

Palestinians: U.S. proposal for West Bank pullback 'unrealistic' Israel warns U.S. not to try to impose its ideas

Combined agency dispatches

THE PALESTINIANS have rejected a U.S. proposal for a limited Israeli troop pullback in the West Bank, the chief Palestinian negotiator said Wednesday after meeting with U.S. State Department officials in Washington.

"The percentages the Americans are proposing are unrealistic," the negotiator, Saeb Erekat, told the Associated Press in a telephone interview.

Mr. Erekat would not say how large a pullback his U.S. counterparts thought was reasonable. Among those participating in the meetings was Dennis Ross, the chief U.S. Mideast peace envoy.

Mr. Erekat said the Americans were getting ready to present their own proposal to break the year-long deadlock in the negotiations.

In the past, U.S. mediators had been reluctant to present their own ideas, saying they did not want to impose a solution. However,

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is becoming increasingly impatient with the refusal of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to budge and make concessions.

Mr. Erekat said Israeli negotiators, who are also in Washington for separate talks with U.S. officials, have not offered the American peace team any new ideas.

"The Israelis came with nothing," Mr. Erekat said.

U.S. mediators hoped to set up direct talks Wednesday with Israeli and Palestinian delegations to try to advance prospects for ending the stalemate in the peace process, diplomats said.

A meeting was tentatively scheduled for 2:00 p.m. local time at the State Department but diplomatic sources said there was some doubt as to whether the bilateral talks would be held.

Meanwhile, Israel's chief negotiator has warned the United States not to try to impose on Israel its ideas

for breaking the long deadlock in peace talks with the Palestinians.

"No one can impose something on Israel that is against its vital interests," Danny Naveh told Israel Radio from Washington when asked about reports that the United States was preparing an aggressive new push to bridge the huge gaps between Palestinians and Israelis.

"Only the involved parties can reach an agreement," Mr. Naveh said. Anyone wishing to advance the peace talks "can't do it by presenting ideas the sides won't accept."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, arrived in Washington Tuesday and met with the State Department's coordinator for the peace process Dennis Ross.

The reported U.S. proposals would be for Israel to immediately begin carrying out a three- or four-stage withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank over a period of several weeks.

In return, after the first

stage of the Israeli pullout, the Palestinians would have to answer several Israeli demands including the dismantling of anti-Israel groups, revision of a PLO Charter calling for Israel's destruction and full security cooperation with Israeli forces.

At the end of the pullbacks, Palestinians would have full control over 28 per cent of the West Bank and civilian authority in another 12 per cent, where the Israeli army would remain present.

Currently the PNA has exclusive control over only three per cent of the West Bank and partial rule in another 24 per cent.

Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government has reportedly offered to cede less than 10 per cent of the West Bank at this time and that only after the Palestinians meet Israel's security demands.

UAE opens trade fair for first time in Baghdad, sends more aid

BAGHDAD (AFP) — More than 60 private companies from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) opened a trade fair on Wednesday in the Iraqi capital, in the first such event by Gulf firms since the 1991 conflict over Kuwait.

Finance Minister Hikmat Mezban Ibrahim said after the opening that the exhibition amounted to "a challenge to the U.S. threats... and shows the solidarity [of the UAE] with the Iraqi people."

Among the goods on display were foodstuffs and medicine, household electrical goods and spare parts for cars, as well as construction materials and petrochemical products.

The Dubai ports authority and the Jabal Ali free trade zone were also represented at the fair, which is due to run 10 days.

In Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, the Red Crescent Association said it would continue sending relief aid to Iraq despite the U.S. threats to attack the sanctions-hit country because of the crisis over U.N. arms inspections.

It was to send food, medicine, and milk to Iraq to help "its children and elderly people who are suffering from tragic living conditions" because of the sanctions in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The aid has been financed through donations of around \$2.3 million, the association's chairman, Khalifa Nasser Al Suweidi, told the official UAE news agency WAM.

The aid, which has in the past been sent by ship, was ordered by the minister of state for foreign affairs, Sheikh Hamdan Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, whose country has repeatedly called for a lifting of sanctions.

Iraqi troops were evicted from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

Israel lifts quotas on Palestinian workers

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel announced Wednesday that it was lifting restrictions on the number of Palestinians authorised to work in Israel.

"We are putting an end to the policy of quotas, from now on the number of Palestinians working in Israel will be determined only by the demand from employers," said General Yaacov Orr, coordinator of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.

Gen. Orr said during a press conference for foreign journalists that Israelis wishing to hire Palestinians would simply submit requests to local employment offices.

He said one aim of the change in policy was to encourage employers to hire Palestinians rather than foreign immigrant workers whose presence is causing growing social problems in the Jewish state.

"Israel prefers Palestinian to foreign workers and we intend to diminish gradually the number of foreign workers in the country," he said.

The general said a recent downturn in Israeli economic activity had depressed the demand for Palestinian and foreign workers and so it was difficult

to estimate the number of potential jobs for residents of the occupied territories.

"Everything depends on the employers, the number could be 40,000, 50,000 or 100,000, it depends on their needs," he said.

Currently around 50,000 Palestinians have permits to work in Israel, half the number in 1990 before Israel began restricting access to its territory due to bombings and other attacks by Palestinian groups.

As part of the new Israeli policy of trying to make Palestinian workers more attractive to Israeli employers, the army has also decided to permit 5,000 selected workers from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank remain at their workplaces in Israel throughout the week.

Previously all Palestinian workers had to return home at night, excluding them from around-the-clock construction projects and jobs requiring frequent overtime or night-time work.

To benefit from the eased restrictions, Palestinians must be at least 28 years old, married and have already worked in Israel for at least three years.

Employers must provide adequate housing and name

a foreman to ensure the Arabs remain at the work-site.

Gen. Orr said the defence ministry had also decided to take "a calculated risk" and provide special security clearances for 30,000 Palestinians who will be allowed to reach their jobs even during security closures of the occupied territories.

Previously following major attacks the army sealed the territories, barring all workers from entering Israel.

The closures have lasted anywhere from days to months, causing serious economic hardship for the Palestinians and disrupting work in many Israeli enterprises.

Gen. Orr said Israeli authorities were concerned about falling living standards in the Palestinian areas over the past four years, largely due to restrictions on the entry of Palestinian workers into Israel.

The economic hardship undermine support for the peace process while strengthening the influence of anti-Israel groups, notably Islamists who gain popular support by offering social services to poor families, he said.

Iraq air strikes not a just war, say bishops

LONDON (AFP) — Ten Anglican bishops have declared their opposition to military action against Iraq, arguing it would not be a "just war" if Britain and the United States launched air strikes against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

In an open letter to the British government, the bishops expressed their opposition to the use of military force because of the danger of large-scale civilian casualties, the Daily Telegraph reported on Wednesday.

They said it would be morally weak and would "reinforce the already deep Muslim mistrust of the West."

The bishops of Monmouth, Kingston, Bangor, Croydon, Aston, Manchester, St. German, Truro, Sheffield and Worcester signed the letter, which was handed out at the General Synod on Tuesday.

"We do not write from a pacifist position but from a common concern to urge the government to search for alternatives to violence," said the bishops.

The Labour government should strive towards "an international consensus" rather than allowing a "super-power mentality" to make the running, they added.

Turkish planes bomb Kurds in north Iraq

DIYARBAKIR (R) — Turkish warplanes raided Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq for the second day in a row on Wednesday, Turkish security officials said.

"Planes bombed the Metina region between five and seven o'clock this morning," a security official told Reuters.

He said F-16 jets from the main southeast Turkish city of Diyarbakir had launched the attacks on Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) positions in Metina, a mountainous region on the Iraqi side of the remote border.

The reports conflicted with denials by Turkey that its military is active in Kurdish-held

northern Iraq, which broke from Baghdad's control after the Gulf war in 1991.

"The Turkish armed forces have not carried out operations in northern Iraq for any reason whatsoever," military spokesman Colonel Husnu Dag told a news briefing of diplomatic correspondents on Wednesday.

Security officials in southeast Turkey and witnesses said Turkish troops and jets hit PKK positions in northern Iraq on Tuesday. The rebels use bases in the area in their fight for Kurdish self-rule in southeast Turkey.

Jerusalem killing probably militant attack — police

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — An ultra-Orthodox Jew on his way to morning prayers was stabbed to death, apparently by a Palestinian, in a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem on Wednesday, police said.

Tensions in the volatile city, already running high after nearly a year of deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, have been exacerbated by recent knif-

ings which police suspect were carried out by Islamists.

"It appears that the stabbing was nationalist in motive," a police spokeswoman said.

Earlier Jerusalem police chief, Yair Yitzhaki, said the circumstances of the killing suggested it might have been the work of Islamists.

"A Jew in Jerusalem is stabbed during an early-

morning stroll to the synagogue, a quiet place, no one around him — these circumstances raise the possibility of the direction [of a guerrilla attack]," he told Israel Radio.

Soon after the killing, a Palestinian was lightly wounded in a stabbing in a nearby Jewish neighbourhood in the city's eastern half. Police said the second incident was unconnected with the earlier killing.

Iran's ambassador denies foreign reports of Iranian ambitions in Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — Iranian ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Ali Subhani on Wednesday stated that his country has no ambitions of any kind in Iraq and its forces will not undertake any action that would escalate the situation in the Gulf.

In an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, marking Iran's celebration of the 19th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Mr. Subhani said all foreign analyses claiming otherwise are totally untrue.

Iran does not support a military solution to the crisis because similar moves have proven futile in the past, he said, adding that his country is also against any economic sanctions imposed as a political tool to achieve specific objectives.

However, he urged Iraq to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions so as not to give external powers any justification to launch a military strike, which he said would have very serious consequences.

The possibility of an explosion is increasing because efforts to contain the crisis have not yet achieved good results, Mr. Subhani said. However, he added that these efforts are continuing.

The ambassador said Iran, which is the current president of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), is exerting strenuous efforts through the OIC secretary general to end the crisis peacefully with the help of Islamic countries.

Referring to Jordanian-Iranian relations, Mr. Subhani said the two sides are undertaking joint action in order to further bolster bilateral ties. He stated that Jordan's participation in the Islamic conference held in Tehran recently contributed most positively to bolstering political, economic, information and parliamentary relations.

The ambassador announced that Iranian economic and parliamentary delegations are due to arrive

in Amman soon. He said it was agreed that the Iranian embassy in Amman open a special office to promote trade relations and a senior Iranian official will be working through the embassy to achieve that goal.

Jordan and Iran are also conducting negotiations for the resumption of air transport between Tehran and Amman to transport goods, tourists and students, and others, Mr. Subhani said.



HIZBOLLAH SUPPORTER EXAMINES MODEL: A female Hizbollah supporter Wednesday observes a partially damaged Israeli-made Merkava tank which was on display during an Islamic resistance exhibition in Beirut. Hizbollah displayed various maquettes representing operations carried by the group against Israeli troops in southern Lebanon (AFP photo)

Majali calls on Jordanians to transcend 'culture of shame' in finding employment

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has called on Jordanian citizens to transcend what he called the "culture of shame" and undertake training in trades that can guarantee employment and help them fill jobs currently held by guest workers.

Education and training has become a very basic factor for development in Jordan and a means for young men and women to find employment, said the prime minister at the opening of a three-day workshop designed to highlight the start of a three-year project on supporting training and employment in Jordan partially financed by the United Nations.

"We keep talking about unemployment and poverty without delving into its causes,

and we keep talking about the army of unemployed Jordanians at a time when the Kingdom hosts nearly half a million guest workers," he said.

Dr. Majali said it is regrettable to see tens of thousands of trained Jordanians taking unproductive administrative and clerical jobs, while shunning manual work by failing to overcome the predicament of the "culture of shame."

Jorgen Lissner, resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), told the meeting that young people find it difficult to enter the labour market because they lack job experience.

He said many governments have responded to this challenge by adapting the educational system to the labour market's needs. But he added that this process requires a long time to adapt to the market's requirements and therefore there is need to create special bodies to offer training in different trades to school and college graduates.

In his remarks to the meeting, Minister of Labour Saleh Khasawneh said unemployment and poverty problems can be addressed through increasing productivity, distributing income fairly, and raising the standard of educational and health services.

Dr. Khasawneh said these two issues can be settled through sound economic, investment, social, financial and monetary policies and not only through adapting education to the labour market's needs. He added that the ministry has embarked on the social safety package plan, which is expected to help Jordan deal with the situation, and is seeking donations from friendly nations and international organisations.

The plan, he pointed out, comprises four main elements: improving the infrastructure of poorer areas, financing small-size income-generating projects, promoting the work of the National Aid Fund, and creating a special fund to finance training and employment.

The workshop will cover the plan's project for training and employment. The project will cost \$6 million, of which \$5 million will be provided by the World Bank while the Jordanian treasury is pledging \$1 million.

about the incident and advising them to take extra precautions, the source was quoted as saying by the agency.

But the embassy "was still on the lowest level of alert," the source said.

There are over 2,000 British nationals living in Jordan, and "we are not advising British nationals to leave or avoid leaving Jordan," he stressed.

In London, a Foreign Office spokesman was quoted by AFP as saying: "Obviously in the present climate, you might be inclined to link the attack with Iraqi crisis."

2 suspected PKK separatists killed in shootout with police

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Two suspected Kurdish separatists were killed in a shoot-out with a Turkish anti-terror squad in Istanbul Wednesday, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Police said a man and a woman going by the code-names "Ahmet" and "Zona" were found dead in an apartment in Istanbul's Fatih district after the shoot-out, which erupted when the squad raided the suspects' hide-out.

Weapons, a bomb and documents were seized in the apartment, police said.

The agency described the two victims as "separatist terrorists," shorthand for members of the outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

"Ahmet" and "Zona" were suspected of involvement in an armed attack on a police station in Istanbul's Umraniye district in November, police said.

One policeman was killed in the Umraniye incident and two were wounded.

More than 28,000 people, including rebels, security force members and civilians have been killed in PKK-related violence in Turkey's southeast since 1984 when the group launched its armed campaign for a Kurdish homeland.

Attempt on British embassy foiled

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian police guarding the British embassy on Wednesday foiled a man's attempt to throw a Molotov bomb at the embassy building in Abdoun, an embassy spokesperson said.

"The guards arrested the man while he was carrying the bomb at 1:00 p.m.," the spokesperson, who asked not to be named, said.

"The only thing we know is that he was alone," the spokesperson added.

Asked whether the attempt

was linked to U.S. and Britain threats to launch a military strike against Iraq, the source said "there was no concrete evidence about this but doubts move to that direction."

Minister of Interior Nafith Rashid said the person, identified as Abed Azam, was being interrogated by police.

Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times that the attack was part of attacks "against the security of the Kingdom which are directed from outside."

Mr. Rashid said foreign embassies were being put under tight security arrangements.

"This act is one of many

attempts that were not disclosed to the media," Mr. Rashid said without elaboration.

The minister ruled out any connection between the attack and the U.S. threats to launch a military attack on Iraq following Baghdad's refusal to allow U.N. inspectors to enter presidential palaces.

Another British embassy official was quoted by Reuters as saying that the embassy "was notifying staff it was taking action to reinforce the security of the embassy in conjunction with the Jordanian police."

The embassy was telling British organisations in Jordan

Minister: Detainee commits suicide

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

Mr. Rashid said Ismail Suleiman Ajarmeh was arrested for alleged involvement in "a very sensitive security case."

The Ajarmeh family, meanwhile, insisted they want a full investigation.

"Our brother was killed and we want to know who was responsible for his death," said one of his brothers at their home in Na'our, southwest of Amman.

The brother said Na'our Mayor Thamiir Malouh Fayez informed the family on Wednesday about the death of Ajarmeh and asked them to take the body.

"We will not bury him before we know why he was kept in jail for several months without trial and how he was died," the brother said.

He said their brother was arrested on Sept. 26, three days after the attack that left two Israeli security officials, Moshe Levin and Amikam Hadar, injured.

Ajarmeh's brother said another person, Samih Mohammed Dawood, was also arrested but released after two months of detention.

"Our brother was not affiliated with any political party and we were shocked when he was arrested," said another brother.

His family said they sought a meeting with His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday but could only meet with Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, who promised to arrange an audience with His Majesty in the coming two days.

Syria lifts brief ban on Jordanians entering with new version of passport

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Syria has lifted a several-day ban on the entry of Jordanians holding issues of newly-disbursed passports after the Foreign Ministry

pressed Damascus for explanations over its surprise move, officials and diplomats said Wednesday.

Many Jordanians had complained over the past week that they were turned back at the Syrian borders because the

new passports did not include provisions for the place of residence and had a different format than the previous ones.

The Passports Department (PD) last week began issuing the new passports under a different format to facilitate the

travel of citizens in line with global standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

"The misunderstanding was settled," Issam Haddad, consul at the Syrian embassy in Amman, told the Jordan

Times. "Now, any Jordanian carrying a valid passport can enter Syria with no restrictions as long as it includes a national number."

The director general of the PD, Awni Yifras, said the Syrians apparently had objections

because the new passports did not include the place of residence of the holder.

"The new passports were printed according to international standards, which do not attach importance to the place of residence," added Mr. Yifras.

Officials said Amman had informed Damascus about its plans to issue the new version of the passports long before they were disbursed.

Unlike the previous format, vital information about the

passport's holder is printed in horizontal form, instead of the previous vertical form. The national number, given to anyone who is included in a family book, is displayed on the front page instead of the back page.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 The Dinky Di's
14:30 The Prince and the Pauper
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Marker
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Documentary
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Big Brother Jake
20:00 Trivial Pursuit
20:30 Lois and Clark
21:10 The Opa Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Soccer Match — Ghana vs. Togo
00:12 Feature film — "Beyond the Stars"

Friday Programmes
14:10 Ruxpin
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 Lucky Luke
18:00 Tarzan
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Documentary — Allo la Terre
19:35 F.R.I.E. N.D.S.
20:00 Life on the Internet
20:30 The Album Show
21:10 Adventures of Brisco County
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "The Beast"
23:59 Comedy — "Almost Home"

PRAYER TIMES
04:59 Fajr

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

06:18 (Sunrise) Duha
11:50 Dhuhr
14:55 'Asr
17:22 Maghreb
18:40 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Cold weather conditions will continue to prevail during the weekend, skies partly cloudy, with a chance of scattered showers, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, rainy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 03/10
Aqaba 11/20
Deserts 02/12
Jordan Valley 10/18

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 09, Aqaba 20
Humidity readings: Amman 66 per cent, Aqaba 72 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Faysal Dabbas 759155
Dr. Fakhri Babbaji 552233
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 88140
Dr. Mazen Nabil 83045
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asama pharmacy 637055
Naironki pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 278770
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 5680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 642481/6
Aklieh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher 566722/7
The Islamic, Abdali 5666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital

IBN SINA HOSPITAL (09)900560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990590
IBRID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:25 Bombay (RJ)
08:30 Sanan (RJ)
09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)

10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:10 London, Athens (RJ)
18:55 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:20 Moscow (RJ)
19:45 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
00:30 Larnaca (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Sharjah (AH)
15:00 Doha (QR)
15:20 Muscat, Doha (GF)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
16:30 Rome (AZ)
20:00 Tel Aviv (MS)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
23:30 London, Beirut (BA)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
10:00 Moscow (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:30 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
11:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:10 Athens, Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:00 Larnaca (RJ)
21:30 Jeddah (RJ)
23:00 Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)
06:40 Beirut, London (BA)
08:00 Beirut (ME)
11:20 London (BA)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Algiers (AH)
15:55 Doha (QR)
16:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
17:00 Muscat, Dubai (EK)
17:30 Rome (AZ)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
08:00 Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings
(For Thursday and Friday)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Jordan has done everything possible to 'avert the use of force' in Iraq-U.N. weapons inspections standoff — Crown Prince

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday said Jordan has done everything in its power to avert the use of force in the standoff between Iraq and the U.N. over weapons inspections.

"We are living rather a sombre moment, and everything we see on TV is about the movement of armies and air forces; and as I said we have tried to do everything within our power to try and avert this crisis and the use of force," said Prince Hassan at a joint press conference with EC President Jacques Santer.

The Crown Prince also told the press that he and the EC president discussed issues pertaining to partnership with Europe in culture, economic and security affairs.

Following is Prince Hassan's address to the press conference and replies to questions:

"Clearly the status of our discussions was one where ratification would be expected by the parliaments of the EU on the one hand and indeed the Parliament of Jordan on the other.

"I hope that the partnership talks in their three component parts, culture, economic cooperation and indeed security issues, broadly defined, can be a part of progression working to closer relations between Europe and countries of the Mediterranean, both in the West and the East.

"But I assume the concern of the moment is very much security-related, whether in the context of security and stability of the peace process, and this is an issue that we touched

on earlier in the discussions or in terms of security and stability of the region broadly defined with particular focus on developments in Iraq and beyond."

Q: With the impasse in the Middle East peace process and the volatile critical situation in Iraq, if anything happens on either side, would the partnership agreement with Jordan move accordingly and in what direction would it change?

A: I'd like to emphasize the importance of regional cooperation with Europe in the context of the 15 European governments. I think there is a shared concern for the furthering of the peace process on the one hand and for the possibility of the use of force, which of course at this critical moment is the key question on our minds. The eventuality of the use of force if this is to take place at all is one that has to be considered. We have to look beyond the weeks ahead and in that sense, I want to say that clearly as far as the baskets of cooperation with Europe are concerned, and when we speak about economic cooperation, I just like to say that the good news story in terms of Jordan's economy is that clearly, let me give you one parameter: Inflation has been brought down from over 20 per cent in 1992, to three per cent in 1997. But again, when we speak about the cost of war in terms of the region, and I'm not talking about the cost of the mobilisation of the forces present in the region, I took the opportunity of observing that recession in Southeast Asia might mean that arms manu-

facturers are looking for new markets. But at the same time, I want to say that as far as the cost of war is concerned in human terms, the possibility of displaced persons, refugees in large numbers, the breakdown of infrastructure, the shortage of oil supplies, all of these issues are of deep and dividing concern to Jordan, and the sense of déjà-vu in 1990 to 1998 doesn't make it any better.

Q: Everybody knows what will happen to Iraq if it doesn't comply with the United Nations resolutions but what about those who do not listen to your pleas for a diplomatic solution?

A: I think that public perception in this part of the world looks at the implementation of the United Nations resolutions in the case of Iraq, in the case of Palestine, in the case of South Africa if we recall an embargoed country for many, many years with weapons of mass destruction, and yet an embargo being raised to lead to a political transitional solution to political prisoners being released, to democracy prevailing with equal rights for all. We look at United Nations resolutions in Bosnia, where war criminals are within a fairly short distance of international forces and yet effectively they are not brought to justice. So I think that in terms of public perception there is this feeling that why do United Nations resolutions not get implemented across the board? We watched with interest, of course, the visit of His Holiness the Pope to Cuba rather closer to Mexico. It is rather interesting to hear the commentator of one

of the leading channels saying "defiance in Iraq and defiance in Cuba." Of course, there are different contexts of defiance and there are different solutions to problems. But the fact is that we are living rather a sombre moment at the moment, and everything we see on TV channels is about the movement of the armies and air forces and as I said, we have tried to do everything within our power in every contact that we have with the French government, the Russian government, not to mention the United States, the United Kingdom and indeed regional governments, to try and avert this crisis in the sense of averting the use of force.

I'd also like to comment by saying that this region is the only region that has no conflict prevention, or conflict resolution centre, we have no regional problems solving mechanism. So, on the one side we have the Arab League, which is now expressing an interest in averting the use of force, on the other side we have the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) but the time is ticking on and I don't think we have much time left to contain this recurrence of the use of force.

Q: Your Royal Highness, I wonder if you could share with us your concerns specifically if there are strikes on Iraq, how that will affect your country, the fall out for the region and the impact it would have on the peace process?

A: We are talking of the possibility of hundreds of thousands of refugees moving in the directions of the borders of Iraq's neighbours and we are

not the only neighbour of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Syria. That, of course, is a position that has compelled us to say that we would be forced to close the border. We simply cannot absorb further hundreds of thousands of refugees. During the 1990-1991 period, it was the situation of receiving third country nationals and we were able to process the movement of 1.5 million people and yet we were the most affected country after Kuwait, of 24 countries most affected by the Gulf war, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, Jordan was at the top of the list. There is that fear, there is also the concern obviously, about the future of oil supplies and there again I want to say that oil supplies from Iraq are our only source at the present time. To talk about building infrastructure for new pipelines from other countries is going to take a lot of time and cost a lot of money. And I just want to make it very clear that whatever the good news of our economic achievements, which among other things, have made us eligible for Euro-partnership, the bad news is to try to maintain that standard of achievement in what obviously would be a very, very difficult situation. We are in a sense, as I said, facing a sense of déjà-vu, we've been through it all once before and we continue to express the hope that Iraq will comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions, that a political resolution can be averted, that force can be avoided and that indeed the question of a regional security cooperative concept can develop to include all coun-

tries in the region, from Iraq eastward. We are obviously concerned of the future of dual containment. What's going to happen to the so-called dual containment when such strikes take place, what is the future of relations with Iran. Again, one of the political questions that are raised, particularly at the time we hear the continued talking of cultural dialogue, Samuel Huntington thesis of the new threat, the green peril, the Islamic peril. These are all issues that have to be borne in mind. I know they are not very comfortable issues to be mentioned at a time like this, but we are not talking about comfort, we are talking about the perceptions of our population, and I think the Arab population and the Muslim population in this region who are living one of the major psychological crises of this age.

Turning on from the psychological situation, I think it is going to be very difficult to further the peace process in the fallout of a military confrontation. I think, as General Schwarzkopf said the other day, "if bombing takes place, people will get up and dust themselves off and it might all start again," given the Vietnamese example and with reference towards a resolution, the resolve of the Iraqi people. But as far as confrontation is concerned and its effects on the situation in the Palestinian territories, already we are being shown film material of demonstrations in the territories and I think is a very difficult situation. Of course, there is another school of thought that says well, if the Iraqi crisis is resolved by the use of force,

we might find a more subdued response to the importance of returning to the negotiating table. But thus far, the news has not been very encouraging, particularly after the respective visits of Prime Minister Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to Washington.

Q: At what point would Jordan support a military strike against Iraq?

A: I don't think the question of Jordan supporting a military strike against an Arab country has ever been considered under any condition.

Q: Even if the United Nations decided that Iraq is not complying with the United Nations resolutions?

A: We are an Arab country. In 1956, there was an attack on an Arab country, Egypt, at that time, the so-called tripartite British, French and Israeli. President Nasser continued in power for several years more.

A couple of years later, a friendly government was changed in Baghdad, and Iraqi history since then for you to see. We feel that very serious consideration is to be given not only to the content of an air strike in its limited objectives of compliance with the removal of weapons of mass destruction, which incidentally doesn't affect Washington, London, Paris and Moscow as directly as they affect us here living in this [situation], of the possibility of the fall of a missile. We are firmly opposed to the presence of weapons of mass destruction in this region as a whole without exception. But at the same time, I think consideration has to be given to the political aftermath, and the questions you have asked that are very relevant to that,

whether in the case of Palestine or in the case of the future of the region. We don't want to see this region Balkanised into small groups of violent, chronic terrorist, whether sectarian, tearing up the heart of this region.

Q: Your Royal Highness said your meeting with President Santer was the first after the signature of the association agreement with the European Union. How do you assess the Jordan-European relations, especially economic relations?

A: As to this partnership agreement, it is basically about economic and cultural cooperation. But as to the cooperation in political spheres, we hope that we can bridge the Mediterranean by building institutional cooperation like parliamentary relations and civic society within the framework of the state of law. We hope that this agreement will be implemented within clearly defined principles.

Q: Is there any message which you intend to address the Iraqi president through the Iraqi foreign minister during his visit to Jordan?

A: Our stand is very clear, as was explained by His Majesty King Hussein in his message addressed to me while he was in London. The U.N. Security Council's stand and its reference to the military option is not one of deception. There is serious probability of resorting to a military strike, but we hope the mediation efforts as conducted by Arab, Islamic, French and Russian governments will lead to a political solution that would save the Iraqi people from suffering.



DELEGATES EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO PRINCESS: HRH Princess Rahma is presented with a gift by the president of one of the 12 gymnastics federations attending the general assembly meeting of the Arab Gymnastics Federation, which opened in Amman Wednesday (Petra photo)

Deputies ask government to lift ban on demonstrations

By Fairouz/Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Several Lower House deputies asked the government on Monday to lift a ban on all public demonstrations of solidarity with Iraq, saying the decision contradicted democratic rights and freedom of expression.

Threats by the United States and Britain to strike Baghdad if it does not give U.N. arms inspectors unlimited access to sites suspected to contain materials for weapons of mass destruction has enraged many Jordanians who remain supportive of the Iraqi people.

"At a time when Iraq is under [the threat of] an American attack, rallies and marches should be allowed as an expression of Jordan's sympathetic position towards Iraq," leftist Deputy Nashat Hamameh told the House.

The government on Tuesday

banned any rallies and warned the mainly Islamist-led opposition parties, which include pan-Arabists and leftists, that it was ready to take measures to enforce the decision was issued.

Mr. Hamameh said he was surprised by the move, which also covers any indoor and outdoor gatherings that can be construed as public demonstrations or political marches.

The ban dampened the hopes of the opposition to hold a procession from the Grand Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman to the nearby Hashemiyah square after this Friday's noon prayers.

Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid on Tuesday said the government "will not allow any marches or movement under any slogan for any reason anywhere in the Kingdom at this crucial stage that the country is passing through."

In a statement carried by the

Jordan News Agency, Petra, he said the measures are aimed at safeguarding the country and preventing any "attempt by those harbouring ill-intentions against this country to infiltrate our ranks."

Deputy Mohammad Bataineh, the only member of the Communist Party in the House, also asked the government to allow opposition parties and professional unions to organise public demonstrations.

"We do not want to regress," Dr. Bataineh said. "The government should reconsider its latest ban and should allow the other side to express its opinion regarding the oppressive attack."

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, replying to the deputies' concerns, said Jordanians were highly educated and "disciplined and did not need this tool, public demonstration, to express their

opinion."

"We do not fear intellectual, opinion leaders, professional associations' presidents or political parties' secretary generals, because they are disciplined," Dr. Ensour told the House. "But rather we fear infiltrators and enemy agents, whom we should resist in emergencies."

Officials said the government's move was a precautionary measure to defuse a possible outbreak of pro-Iraqi sentiments similar to that during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis, when thousands of Jordanians took to the streets in support of Iraq.

Security sources told Reuters that they have been put on a state of alert while protection of key government installations and Amman-based Western targets has also been stepped up against possible sabotage acts during any outbreak of hostilities.

Also during yesterday's session, Amman Fifth District Deputy Munir Sobar asked the government to reaffirm its commitment to keeping bread subsidies in place.

The government reassured its pledge to support Mr. Sobar's demand.

Ironically, Mr. Sobar was minister of supply in the Cabinet of Abdul Karim Kabariti, which lifted the subsidies in line with IMF demands in August 1996. The move then led to protests in Karak and other nearby towns.

After a two-month discussion, the House finally completed its discussion of the draft customs law, which it inherited from the 12th Parliament.

However, the House is expected to endorse all 258 articles of the law, part of a new package of economic legislation, and vote on it during its upcoming session.

what's going on

PIANO RECITAL

* Piano recital by French pianist Philippe Giusiano at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, Feb. 14, at 8:00 p.m. (to perform pieces by Chopin, Ravel, and Rachmaninoff).

FILMS

* Spanish film "The Swordship Teacher" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabbal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

* "Goya" (in English with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazin Asfour) at Darat Al Fann, Jabbal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m.

PLAY

* Children's play "A Theatre Dream" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. (daily until Feb. 21).

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Sudanese artist Saleh Al Murr at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 23.

* Valentine's Day bazaar at Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation off Wadi Sagra Street (Tel. 6991412, until Feb. 14).

* Private collection of Mamoun Bishara entitled "A Vision, An Identity" at Darat Al Fann, Jabbal Weibdeh, until March 5 (Tel. 643251).

Police arrest two in connection with stolen 'Picasso' collection

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police on Wednesday announced the arrest of two of four Arab nationalists in connection with the seized collection of stolen paintings, suspected of being the work of Spanish artist Picasso, that were smuggled into Jordan for sale from a neighbouring country.

The paintings, along with two gold statues, were found in the possession of four Jordanians who were arrested

after police were tipped off that the men were looking for art buyers to sell the paintings.

An official source said the two men, both Iraqis, testified that they smuggled the goods via the Jordanian-Iraqi border, and that "they spent two months trying to find buyers."

"When they could not sell the paintings, they asked four Jordanians to help them find buyers and to target tourists and Israeli art collectors," the official said.

Jordanian officials have said the paintings, believed to have been stolen from a Kuwaiti palace during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, were smuggled into the Kingdom by four Iraqi nationals.

The officials hinted that there is a large possibility that the paintings are fakes and that the paintings "were referred to professional art experts to determine if they were originals."

If proven authentic, the paintings could be worth over \$40 million.

Three charged with murder for 1997 attack

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Criminal Prosecutor has charged three people, including a woman, with premeditated murder in connection with a May 1997 attack on a postal van in Karak, according to judicial sources.

The attack on May 3 left Abdul Wahab Ahmad Ali, the van's driver, dead. The assailants escaped with the JD100,000 that was being transported in the van.

Maha Mohammad, 27, Izzat Fawzi, 38, and

Mohammad Haroun, 36, were also charged by Criminal Prosecutor Bassem Momani with theft, criminal complicity, and possessing an unlicensed gun.

Two additional suspects, Hani Mustafa, 40, and Ahmad Abdul Rahim, were charged with purchasing stolen goods.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the third defendant Mohammad Haroun, was employed by Abdul M'uti Nasser Company, a transport service delivering mail and money between banks in Amman and cities in the

south, and used to accompany the victim on these trips.

Mr. Haroun then met with Mr. Fawzi and suggested that they kill the driver of the van and steal the money transported on their trips, the sheet added.

The two decided that they needed a female partner to help them with their plot, whereupon they recruited Ms. Mohammad, it said.

On the day of the incident, the sheet added, the defendants headed to Wadi Musa, met with Mr. Ali, lured him to a deserted area, struck him on the

head with a bottle, then Mr. Fawzi drew a gun and shot him.

The three then took the money that was in the van and fled the scene to Amman, where they split the money. The defendants also gave the two other suspects, Mr. Mustafa and Mr. Abdul Rahim, an amount of U.S. dollars that was in the van to be exchanged.

According to the judicial sources, the case of the five will be transferred to the Criminal Court, which will set a date to start the trial.

Valentine's Day fever sweeping the country with special deals for lovers

By Munther Murjan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Valentine's Day fever is sweeping Jordan as flower shops, restaurants, candy shops and music centres compete to help Jordanians find ways to make hearts melt on Saturday.

Only several years back, Valentine's Day almost went unnoticed in Jordan. But rapid social changes and greater openness have altered popular perceptions, though the celebration remains restricted to those who can afford it.

Freddy For Music, in cooperation

with Alissar Flowers, have come up with a new concept they termed "valen-tune" — sending flowers with a live love song performed by a soloist or a band.

Rania Mdanat from Freddy For Music said scores of people from all ages and walks of life had telephoned to inquire about the concept. Many callers also made bookings for Saturday, when people worldwide celebrate Valentine's Day.

"We made prices as low as JD25 for a solo musician, either a guitarist or saxophonist, which we believe is affordable," she told the Jordan Times. "Of course, if you wish to

have a band or a pianist in the middle of Wadi Rum, with food and roses surrounding you and your sweetheart, we can fulfil that wish for the right price," she explained.

For flower shops, Valentine's Day means brisk business. A red rose that normally sells for JD1 can easily fetch up to JD5 and sometimes JD10.

Five-star hotels, restaurants and popular food joints scrambled to win customers, promising candle-lit gourmet dinners, free flowers, chocolates, heart-shaped cookies and other surprises.

"Chocolate to say 'I love you'."

screamed a newspaper ad placed by a renowned chocolatier.

Some Jordanians said they were planning to rent limousines to take their sweethearts on a tour of Amman with a bottle of champagne.

Taybet Zaman, a renovated tourist resort near the rose-red city of Petra, invited Jordanians to enjoy two-days and one-night "of uninterrupted pampering," including a Turkish bath treat and a "hearty breakfast."

Some, however, said they weren't planning to celebrate the event.

"I can hardly find money to feed

my family," said office boy Mohammad Nasser, a father of eight who earns JD80 a month.

"You want me to waste money on a rose for my wife?" he asked.

"I am totally against limiting your expression of love to your wife to one day a year. This is encouraged even from a religious point of view," said Rami Omar, a shop assistant in the popular area of Qweismeh. "Love should be celebrated throughout the year with affection," he added. "But I do not approve of the idea of sending flowers to your girlfriend."

But in general, many said they

looked forward to February 14 every year to express their love to their sweetheart.

Olga Bajali, who is married, said she always looks forward to Valentine's Day, because her husband spoils her.

"On this day, I usually wake up to find a bouquet of roses, a heart shaped chocolate box, and a card. Later, my husband takes me out for dinner."

Lama Subaei, an executive secretary, had a different view. "For me, Valentine is to celebrate love with friends and not lovers only, since they usually break up after a while."

N. Ireland peace process threatened by IRA killings

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland security forces were Wednesday investigating the extent of Irish Republican Army (IRA) involvement in two murders which have raised fresh uncertainty over the future of the peace process.

A return to violence by the IRA, if proved, would almost certainly lead to the expulsion from talks of its political wing Sinn Féin and threaten a return of the IRA's campaign of shootings and bombings.

Although no group has yet said it carried out the murders — one drug-related and the other sectarian according to police — security sources indicated three people arrested over the second killing were IRA members.

Suspensions of IRA involvement were heightened when the other main Catholic paramilitary group, the hardline Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), denied killing either Brendan Campbell, a Catholic drug dealer, or Robert Dougan, a Protestant with links to the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association.

But the absence of any statement by the IRA of an intention to abandon its

seven-month ceasefire also raised the prospect that the killings were carried out by renegade Catholic paramilitaries.

Some members of the IRA are known to have grown disillusioned with the talks process over perceived compromises made to Protestants. Last month the group warned the negotiations were "in crisis."

But security sources have repeatedly stressed that the IRA has strictly observed the ceasefire it called on July 20 last year, and attacks credited to it since then are at an all-time low.

London and Dublin have insisted all participants in the negotiations abide by a principle of non-violence. The ejection of Sinn Féin, as the representative of the main Catholic paramilitary group, would effectively sound the death-knell for the talks, which London and Dublin have said must reach a solution by the end of May.

It could also free the IRA to resume its campaign of shootings and bombings in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain.

If the two governments do not expel Sinn Féin, the talks could collapse anyway with the withdrawal in

protest by Protestants.

In addition, suspicion of IRA involvement could be enough for Protestant paramilitaries to carry out retaliatory killings.

Last month the Protestant Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) was forced out of the talks after police blamed its military wing the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) for the murders of three Catholics.

The UDP and the main Protestant party the Ulster Unionists have already accused the IRA of being behind both killings, and the UDP has demanded Sinn Féin too be thrown out.

The UDP's Gary McMichael said: "All the fingers are being pointed solely at the IRA and that being the case, their ceasefire has ended."

Late Tuesday London warned that if either murder was shown to have been committed "by an organisation connected with a participant in these talks, then the implications of that will need to be very seriously examined."

"The government is determined to maintain the integrity of this process," said junior Northern Ireland minister Paul

Murphy.

Later Wednesday Mr. Murphy's boss, Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam, was expected to be questioned by Protestant MPs in the House of Commons.

Dougan was shot dead in a Belfast suburb as he sat behind the wheel of his car. Shortly afterwards the three suspects were arrested in a flat in Catholic area of west Belfast after a car was abandoned nearby.

Campbell, who had escaped another attempt on his life in the past three weeks, died late Monday after being shot in south Belfast. Reports said the IRA's "punishment" arm, Direct Action Against Drugs, was responsible.

Meanwhile, another Protestant escaped without injury when he was shot at by a masked man in Portadown, in the south of province Tuesday night.

In nearby Armagh, a second man was also shot twice in the left knee and once in the right and beaten with sticks by a group of masked men. The attack was typical of "punishments" favoured by Catholic paramilitaries for activities deemed harmful to the community.



American actor Robert de Niro uses a flashlight to hinder journalists as he leaves the Paris courthouse after questioning in connection with a prostitution ring aimed at wealthy Middle East clients (Reuters photo)

Robert de Niro denies involvement in call-girl ring

PARIS (AFP) — Robert de Niro denied any involvement in an international call-girl ring, his lawyer said Wednesday a day after the actor was interrogated by a judge probing a prostitution racket.

Lawyer Georges Kiejman said at a news conference that Mr. de Niro told investigators that "he had never paid a young woman."

The 54-year-old Oscar-winning actor was brought in Tuesday by police as a witness on a warrant from investigating magistrate Frederic N'Guyen, who interrogated the actor for two and three quarters hours following several hours of questioning by police.

"It is evident that Mr. de Niro has nothing to do with any pimping case," Mr. Kiejman said.

The U.S. actor was questioned in connection with an investigation launched last year into a ring allegedly supplying high-class prostitutes to well-heeled clients.

Mr. Kiejman said that of the three women mentioned during the interrogation Mr. de Niro told investigators he had merely shaken hands with two and that "his answers on the third are censored."

Mr. de Niro was picked up by police from the prestigious Bristol Hotel for questioning on returning to Paris Tuesday after taking a long weekend break in shooting a film directed by John Frankenheimer entitled *Ronin*.

Mr. Kiejman said he was fil-

ing a complaint for violation of freedom of movement and right to legal privacy because of leaks to the press that his client was being sought for questioning in the probe.

Prostitution is legal in France but pimping is not.

Tuesday, investigators brought Mr. de Niro in before noon and released him from Paris police headquarters shortly after 9:00 p.m. (2000 GMT). They said the actor had raised no objections.

Mr. Kiejman, a celebrity lawyer and former justice minister who has acted for Mohammad Fayed, the owner of Harrod's Department Store in London, and the family of former French President Francois Mitterrand, also criticised the fact that he had been questioned all day.

Mr. N'Guyen's investigation began a year ago following the arrest of a "glamorous" photographer and an ex-model believed to be the organisers of an international racket supplying high-class prostitutes for the rich and famous.

Former Scandinavian model Anika Brumack and French photographer Jean-Pierre Bourgeois, who worked for soft porn magazines, are facing charges of procurement.

They are alleged to have run some 40 women from a Paris telephone number who were dispatched to dates with well-heeled businessmen in Paris as well as in Monaco, New York, London or the Arab emirates, for sums ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 francs (\$850 to \$3,300), excluding travel expenses.

A number of U.S. and other film stars have been mentioned in connection with the probe, which has also seen charges levelled against French film producer Alain Sarde, former top French police officer Paul Baril and former Polish tennis professional Wojtek Fibak.

Ronin is about six mercenaries chasing after a mysterious suitcase coveted by several obscure international groups. Jonathan Pryce, the villain in the latest James Bond movie, is part of the cast.

Shooting began on Nov. 3 and is scheduled to continue until March. The action in Mr. Frankenheimer's film races between the roofs of the historic Montmartre district, the Champs Elysees and other tourist spots in the French capital.

Mr. de Niro leapt to stardom after playing in Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets" and "Taxi-Driver" and won the Academy Award for Best Actor in 1980 for his role in "Raging Bull". He took the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in 1974 for "The Godfather" part II.

Other of his best-known roles include those in "The Deer Hunter", "The Mission" and "Cape Fear".

Mr. Frankenheimer, who turns 68 this month, made the 1962 hit "The Birdman of Alcatraz". He shot "French Connection II" in France.

Czech MPs debate NATO ratification

PRAGUE (AFP) — The Czech parliament began Wednesday debating a bill to ratify the Czech Republic's application to join NATO, of which Prague hopes soon to become a full member.

Opening a debate expected to last some weeks, Premier Josef Trosovsky called on deputies divided over membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to put aside their differences.

"The possibility of joining is a unique chance and a historic challenge for our country. It is up to us to respond," he said.

The Czech Republic along with Hungary and Poland hope to become full NATO members within the next few years. Their foreign ministers have travelled to Washington this week to press their cases.

In Prague, while the centre-right ruling coalition favours NATO entry, opposition Communists, republicans and far-right deputies are against it.

In addition, the largest parliamentary party, the Social Democrats (CSSD) who have 58 out of the

200 seats in parliament, wants a decision on NATO delayed until after legislative elections expected in June.

Although it does not openly oppose NATO membership, the CSSD also wants a referendum on the issue.

Public opinion is also divided. Only 54 per cent support joining NATO, despite efforts by the government since last month to convince Czechs of the benefits.

Mr. Trosovsky said NATO membership would have an economic impact on the country by "strengthening our credibility with foreign investors and financial and trade institutions."

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited by NATO to join the alliance at its Madrid summit last July, and signed accession documents in December.

Actual accession of the three is envisaged for April 1999, pending ratification of the accession documents by the 16 current NATO member states. Canada and Denmark have so far ratified the documents.

Seven dissidents freed but must leave Cuba

HAVANA (AFP) — Six hunger-striking Cuban dissidents have been freed from prison, along with a seventh colleague, on condition that they leave the island nation, a doctor working with them told AFP Tuesday.

Pope John Paul II had asked President Fidel Castro for a gesture for prisoners during a Jan. 21-25 visit here, and the dissidents in the central city of Santa Clara had been considered likely beneficiaries.

Some of the dissidents were freed Jan. 31 and others on Feb. 1, said Armando Ocana, a member of an illegal human rights group to which the dissidents also belonged.

The six members of the Pro-Human Rights Party began their hunger strike on Oct. 9 after they were arrested for demanding an end to the trial of their colleague Daula Carpio.

Ms. Carpio and her sister Roxana were among

the seven dissidents ordered to leave the island.

Mr. Ocana said all the dissidents had been taken to a hospital in Santa Clara due to their poor state of health after the hunger strike.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ocana added, they await a response to their request that some country give them political asylum.

The dissidents are confident they will be allowed to leave Cuba, Mr. Ocana said, but as of Tuesday they had not been approached either by any foreign diplomatic representative about their asylum request.

If there is no official response, the medical doctor said, "they will take turns in renewing their hunger strike."

According to clandestine human rights groups, more than 500 dissidents are in Cuban jails, along with 110,000 common criminals.

First helicopter lands with Afghan quake aid

RUSTAQ, Afghanistan (R) — The first helicopter carrying humanitarian aid for victims of a devastating earthquake arrived in the Afghan town of Rustaq Wednesday, a week after the first quake struck.

The helicopter, which flew in from neighbouring Tajikistan, carried two tonnes of bread, clothes and medicines, relief workers said.

Rustaq is at the centre of the northern Afghan region devastated by last Wednesday's quake and another smaller quake at the weekend.

Relief agencies have put the total death toll as high as 4,200 and say thousands more are homeless. The dead are being buried in mass graves.

The region's remote location and bad weather have severely hampered the relief operation, as has conflict between Afghanistan's purist

Islamist Taliban militia and opposition groups who control the Rustaq region.

Low clouds continued to obscure the mountains Wednesday. Tuesday heavy snow also added to the victims' woes.

"If the weather is good, then we have tonnes of aid ready to come in," said Jarle Thorghersen, a member of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Rustaq.

He said 4,300 people were being sheltered in public buildings around Rustaq, with up to 6,000 more displaced people being put up in private homes.

Up to 28 villages have been badly hit, in many cases completely razed, by the quakes. Lack of transport has made it difficult for Afghans to reach Rustaq for supplies and medical attention.

UNHCR suspends activities in northern Caucasus

MOSCOW (AFP) — The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) announced it was suspending its activities in the northern Caucasus in response to the kidnapping of its mission head, ITAR-TASS said Wednesday.

Vincent Cochetel was grabbed by gunmen on Jan. 29 from his flat in the North Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz and has not been heard of since, though regional officials say they have information he is still alive.

Two men, including Mr. Cochetel's driver, are in detention helping investigators with their inquiries, but neither has been charged.

The driver was left behind when the armed gang burst into the 37-year-old Frenchman's flat.

Police are convinced the kidnappers were tipped off that U.N. staff had withdrawn a large cash sum from a local bank, which had sparked the abduction. U.N. staff

have been followed to the bank within the past month.

Authorities have had no word from the Mr. Cochetel's kidnappers, but last week said they expected to receive a ransom demand soon.

It is U.N. policy is not to pay ransoms, but once contact has been made with the hostage-takers, UNHCR officials say they will offer local authorities a trained hostage negotiator.

Kidnappings have been relatively rare in North Ossetia, even though they are quite common in Chechnya and the neighbouring Russian republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan.

Various Chechen criminal groups are believed to be holding several dozen hostages, including a number of foreign aid workers.

Monday, Chechen special forces freed five Polish aid workers in an early morning raid almost two months after their abduction.

Indian party suggests secular government after ballot

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An Indian politician hinted Wednesday that the Congress party and a centre-left coalition may form a "secular" coalition in the event of a hung parliament to keep Hindu nationalists out of power.

S.G. Vinayagamurthy, of the Tamil Nadu Congress (TMC) party, said he expected an alliance to block the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party).

India goes to the polls Monday, on the first day of a staggered ballot ending on March 7.

The TMC is a key mem-

ber of the outgoing United Front (UF) coalition.

Its minority government was toppled in November by its outside backer, the Congress, after an uneasy cohabitation lasting 18 months, leading to the current elections.

Most analysts expect a fractured election verdict, in which the BJP and its allies are seen as the front-runners ahead of the Congress, followed by the United Front.

The United News of India (UNI) quoted Mr. Vinayagamurthy as saying the Congress and UF would forget their mutual animosity after the vote in order to

foil a BJP-led coalition government.

"We are sure this will happen after the elections, leading to government formation by secular forces," he said. "We have believed cooperation between the UF and Congress was necessary for a stable government."

But Mr. Vinayagamurthy declined to say how many members of the original UF alliance would agree to join a new coalition with the Congress as a member.

The Congress and Front have traded insults during the election campaign.

Fresh food blackmail case in Germany

STUTTGART, Germany (AFP) — Germany's Kaufhof Department Store chain has become the latest victim in a spate of blackmail cases involving the poisoning of food products, a police spokesman said Wednesday.

Cans of milk, suspected of being intentionally contaminated with toxic chemicals, were found in three supermarkets belonging to Kaufhof subsidiaries in Stuttgart.

According to the police spokesman, a mystery black-

mailer has been demanding several million marks from Kaufhof since Jan. 19.

Police have urged consumers in Stuttgart to carefully examine any milk, yoghurt or cream cheese products purchased from Kaufhof, and to report any suspect goods.

Earlier this month, jars of baby food produced by a Stuttgart-based subsidiary of food giant Nestlé were found to have been injected with pesticide.

Another Nestlé subsidiary,

Thomy, was the victim of a similar blackmail in April, 1996, forcing it recall tonnes of goods from around 50 supermarkets after some products were found to have been poisoned.

Meanwhile, the jam manufacturer Schwartau had to issue a public warning in December after several products were found to have been injected with a toxic chemical.

Police are still unsure if the cases are linked to a single blackmailer.

Bosnian president slams French honours for Plavsic

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic has protested at the French government's decision to receive Bosnian Serb leader Biljana Plavsic as a head of state during her visit to France this week.

Ms. Plavsic, who is president of Republika Srpska, the Serbian half of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was accorded full honours in Paris Monday in recognition of her support for the Dayton Peace accords.

"We remind the French government — that Bosnia is a state and the Republika Srpska is simply a part of that state," Mr. Izetbegovic said in a statement handed to the French ambassador in Bosnia, Yves Gaudel.

France's decision to treat Ms. Plavsic as a head of state had "deeply upset Bosnia and its people," he added.

During her one-day stay in Paris, Ms. Plavsic met French President Jacques Chirac and held talks with Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine.

The Dayton Peace accords signed in Paris in December 1995, which ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, established two entities — the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Bosnian Serbs' Republika Srpska.

Mr. Izetbegovic, a Muslim, heads the three-man Bosnian presidency, which also includes the Croat Kresimir Zubak and the Serb Momcilo Krajisnik.

In his statement, Mr. Izetbegovic also complained it was "not the first time" that French attitudes had disappointed the Bosnian government.

He recalled "the deplorable attitude" regarding the former Muslim enclave of Srebrenica of French General Bernard Janvier, who was commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia.

The force has often been accused of allowing the enclave to fall into Serb hands in July 1995.

The president further denounced a French "refusal to cooperate" with the U.N. war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, based in The Hague. Paris has refused to allow French peacekeeping soldiers who were in Bosnia during the civil war to testify before the tribunal.

Mexico rearrests man accused of killing U.S. citizen

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Mexico rearrested Tuesday a man who confessed to killing a U.S. citizen but was freed in a decision that angered the United States.

The news agency Notimex reported that Alfonso Gonzalez, known also as El Chuky, was detained on theft charges Tuesday.

He and three other men had been arrested on Dec. 30 for the murder of a U.S. businessman, John Peter Zarate, two weeks previously. The four had allegedly assaulted Zarate in a taxi.

Mr. Gonzalez was freed on Jan. 3 after criminal court judge Maria Claudia Campuzano, ruled that there was insufficient evidence to hold him even though Mr. Gonzalez and his alleged accomplices had confessed. Judge Campuzano raised hackles by describing Mr. Gonzalez as a modern Robin Hood.

The decision angered the United States even though higher courts reviewed the decision and backed up Judge Campuzano.

Bosnian president slams French honours for Plavski

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Bosnian President Izetbegovic has criticised the French government for awarding the Legion of Honour to a leader of the Bosnian Serb army, a move he said was a slap in the face to the victims of the Bosnian war.

Mr. Plavski, who was awarded the Legion of Honour on Monday, was a senior commander of the Bosnian Serb army during the war. He was also a member of the Bosnian Serb leadership.

Mr. Izetbegovic said the award was a "gross insult" to the victims of the Bosnian war and a "betrayal of the French people's memory". He said the award was a "clear message" that the French government was not serious about ending the war in Bosnia.

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Actress Geena Davis and Robert Rehme, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announce the nominees for Best Picture at the Academy's headquarters in Beverly Hills. The nominees are 'As Good as It Gets', 'The Full Monty', 'Good Will Hunting', 'L.A. Confidential', and 'Titanic.' The Academy Awards will be presented March 23 in Los Angeles (Reuters photo)

Major studios roar to life in Oscar race

LOS ANGELES (R) — The major Hollywood studios roared back to life at the Oscar nominations Tuesday, making it unlikely that independent filmmakers will walk away with the lion's share of awards for a second consecutive year. In 1997, so-called "indie" films like "The English Patient" and "Shine" swept the academy awards in the top categories, leaving many in Hollywood wondering how they could win back the favour of audiences. The answer in 1998: bigger can be better. The \$200 million epic "Titanic" tied the record for most nominations with 1950's "All About Eve", receiving a total of 14 Oscar nods, including best picture. "Titanic" was distributed by two major studios, 20th Century Fox, which is owned by News Corp Ltd., and the Paramount pictures subsidiary of Viacom Inc. News Corp. took home a total 21 nominations and Paramount had 16. The Walt Disney Co. topped the list of studios with the most nominations, garnering a total of 25. A combination of films from its Miramax division including "Good Will Hunting", "The Wings of the Dove" and "Mrs. Brown" pushed Disney past News Corp., which was the second highest nominated studio. Though Miramax has always operated in the independent movie arena, its ties to Disney help give it clout when it comes to signing major, up-and-coming stars, such as Matt Damon in "Good Will Hunting". Buena Vista entertainment, another Disney Unit, received four nominations for "Kundun" and two for action movie "Con Air." Both are big budget films. Warner Bros. 1950s-style film noir murder mystery "L.A. Confidential" took in a total of nine nominations to tie with "Good Will Hunting" as the second most nominated picture. Films under the Time Warner banner received a total of 18 nominations. Warner is a unit of Time Warner Inc., the largest entertainment company in the world. Sony Corp. movies pulled in 19 nominations, putting it third among its major rivals. The Sony group was led by "As Good as It Gets" starring Jack Nicholson, one of Hollywood's biggest names, and Helen Hunt, who stars in the TV comedy "Mad About You." "As Good as It Gets" was the fourth most nominated movie with a total of seven. Lastly Dreamworks, the newest studio in town, received four nominations, all for the Steven Spielberg-directed epic "Amistad."

Edmund Hillary in intensive care

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AFP) — Mount Everest conqueror New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary was Wednesday admitted to an intensive care ward of Christchurch Hospital. Mr. Hillary was taken from the passenger ship Marco Polo when it docked here after a cruise of the Antarctic. Christchurch Hospital said Mr. Hillary, 78, had requested privacy but confirmed he was suffering a lung infection and was admitted to the intensive care unit, but was later transferred to a general ward after his condition improved. The hospital said he was resting comfortably. His wife Mary, Lady Hillary, said she was relieved her husband was recovering. With Sherpa Tensing Norgay, Mr. Hillary conquered Everest on May 29, 1953. He has also been New Zealand's high commissioner to India and was actively involved in fundraising for the Sherpa people of Nepal.

Georgia seeks handover of Russian wanted for assassination bid

TBILISI (AFP) — Georgia said Wednesday it would renew a request to Russia to hand over former security service chief Igor Giorgadze, linked to Monday's failed bid to kill President Eduard Shevardnadze and a previous attack. Security remained tight in the capital two days after the Georgian leader narrowly survived a grenade and gun attack on his motorcade, with police sealing off the district where the assault took place and combing the area for clues. Border patrols have also been stepped up, although the capital was calm and less tense than the previous day. Public Prosecutor Dzhanel Babilashvili said he would write to his Russian counterpart asking for Mr. Giorgadze to be sent to Tbilisi. The Georgian authorities accuse Mr. Giorgadze of being behind an August 1995 car bomb blast which came close to killing Mr. Shevardnadze. Mr. Giorgadze fled to Russia after the attack and is believed to be living in Moscow. Despite repeated Georgian requests, the Russian authorities have so far failed to extradite the suspect, saying they have no idea of his whereabouts. "This latest request from Georgia is perfectly legitimate and certain officials in the Russian security services should not block his extradition," Mr. Babilashvili said. He said he hoped that the latest request would not meet with "an evasive and cynical response" from Moscow. Mr. Shevardnadze Tuesday implicitly accused Russia of involvement in the attack, saying pointedly that "the fact that the organisers of the previous attack lives in Moscow and enjoys an easy life there encourages terrorism." The discovery of a Russian passport on the body of the gunman killed in the attack "spoke volumes," he said, and hinted the attack may have been sparked by powerful Russian oil interests in competition with Georgia to ship crude oil from neighbouring Azerbaijan. Foreign Intelligence Minister Avtandil Iosseliani said on Georgian television Wednesday that "there are many versions and we have not ruled out the version that implicates Igor Giorgadze." "The fact that he is currently living in Moscow shows that they need him there. Why keep the author of an attack in Moscow?" he asked. Meanwhile the leader of Georgia's National Democratic Party, Irina Sarishvili, slammed Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze over the attack. "The interior minister did not contact the president until well after the attack and started taking measures when the president was out of danger. Either he's sick or he's not loyal to the president," she said on state television. The Alya newspaper, citing a "we shall return" message in Georgian left in blood on a wall near the scene of the attack, said the armed gang wanted to harm relations between Tbilisi and Moscow and Russia's breakaway republic of Chechnya. But Russia's Nezavisimaya Gazeta daily said the message showed the gunmen knew they would fail, as they would not have had time to daub the message during a gunfight. Mr. Shevardnadze may have organised the attack himself, the paper said, adding: "We can only note that each time, after an attack, Mr. Shevardnadze comes out of it with his authority increased." The influential newspaper Rezonans questioned how the Georgian secret services could have allowed the 10 to 15-member group that carried out Monday's attack to enter Georgian territory heavily armed and then escape. The Syem Dnei daily said it could not rule out an "Abkhaz connection," a reference to Georgia's breakaway northern province. The paper suggested that the Georgian-made grenades used in the attack had been stolen from the Georgian National Guard. Other analysts have said the attack could have been the work of nationalist opposition elements opposed to Mr. Shevardnadze's moderate approach to Abkhazia and the presence of Russian troops stationed in Georgia. No group has yet claimed the attack.

Marine charged in cover-up in Italian cable-car tragedy

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A U.S. Marine officer in command of a squadron of jets identical to the one that caused the cable-car tragedy in northern Italy was fired for asking his crew members to destroy evidence in the investigation. The New York Times said Wednesday. Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Watters was relieved of command Friday for asking that any videotapes of low-altitude flights in his squadron's EA-6B Prowlers be either erased or be turned over to him. Crew members often take personal videotapes of their flights. Quoting a U.S. Marine Corps statement issued late Tuesday, the daily said the information was based on a retired squadron member who was told of Col. Watters' request by an active crew member who attended his commander's briefing. The U.S. Defence Department has admitted that the Feb. 3 accident that killed 20 people in a Dolomite Mountain valley in northeastern Italy was caused by a Prowler jet flying at below the minimum authorised altitude. Col. Watters' squadron at Marine Air Station at Cherry Point, North Carolina, rotates with three other squadrons assigned to a NATO base in Aviano, Italy, where the cable-cutting Prowler was stationed. U.S. President Bill Clinton has promised to fully investigate the accident, which caused some friction between Italy and the United States.

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Why unleash the jinni?

THANKS ARE in order to the Nagano Winter Olympics for giving the countries and peoples of the Middle East a two-week respite from a certain-to-be devastating war, thus allowing more precious time to pursue peaceful efforts to resolve the Iraq crisis. It goes without saying that all the countries and peoples of the region will fall victim to the consequences of such a war. The negative effects will be felt in all vital spheres — political, economic, psychological and environmental. And the dangers will not be easy to contain. Other nations will surely be affected in one form or another. That is why Washington should think twice before it launches massive strikes against Iraq. The multi-dimensional repercussions from any such onslaught would be with us for a long time and could be more damaging and troubling than what the projected armed conflict aims to accomplish.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright recently said her government has the "authority, responsibility and willingness" to unleash its full war machine against Iraq. Meanwhile, the world waits with anxiety and fear.

There are two initiatives floating about to defuse the ticking time bomb of the standoff between Iraq and the U.S., one by the Arab League and the other by France. Of the two, the French proposal appears to hold more promise because it was not rejected outright by the U.S. The French ideas should be pursued in a rational and sober manner.

All sides should heed the admonitions of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who cautioned against military action and called on the U.S. to avoid "humiliating" the Iraqi people. "I think we all need to think through very carefully the consequences of military actions and what we do afterwards," Mr. Annan has said. "If we maintain fundamentalist positions all around, or purist positions, we will not find a solution, and I appeal for that kind of courage, that kind of wisdom, that will allow us to make the kind of judgements that will allow us to get out of this."

If Iraq indeed possesses the kind of chemical and biological weapons that we all fear, why then push the Iraqi regime up against a wall and force it to deploy these very same weapons that we are desperately trying to keep from being used?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Samir Qatani said the U.S. has claimed it would direct its attack on sites which contain chemical and other weapons of mass destruction, but such an attack can only cause great danger to the Iraqi people and the countries around Iraq as well because the whole atmosphere will be contaminated. U.N. laws ban any attack on a site suspected to be containing such weapons for fear that the danger will spread to the civilian population, according to the writer. But the fact is that the U.S. realises that Iraq no longer possesses any weapons of mass destruction and its plans to attack are designed to devastate the Iraqi nation and dominate the whole Arab World and its oil wealth. Dr. Qatani said. He asked, now that Iraq has announced its acceptance of the U.S. demand that the presidential palaces be inspected, why is Washington threatening to wage war on Iraq? If the U.S. and the Western nations claim that they defend human rights, why are they threatening to annihilate the civilian population of Iraq, he also asked. He said, even if Iraq allowed the inspectors to search every inch of Iraq the U.S. would not lift the sanctions unless it secured full control over the country's oil wealth.

Al Dustour's Nawaf Zaru criticised the Arab and the Islamic countries, in particular Syria and Iran, for their present stand vis-a-vis the Iraqi crisis. Both Syria and Iran realise all too well that they are themselves targeted by Turkey and Israel which are backed by the U.S., and sooner or later their turn will come and they too will face aggression and possible disintegration, Zaru said. The writer said, when the aggressors are finished with Iraq they will turn to Syria and Iran which now maintain hostility towards Baghdad and the Iraqi people; and therefore they ought to take a very positive stand by deed rather than word in defence of the Iraqi nation. It is painful to see Iran preventing a Russian plane carrying parliament members with relief supplies from flying to Iraq, and it is painful to see Syria only paying lip service to Iraq, he said. It is in the interest of both Tehran and Damascus to take the lead and end the sanctions on Iraq and declare that they will confront any aggression on the Arab nation, the writer added. Zaru said Syria and Iran should stand in the forefront, exposing the American acts of terrorism and rallying the Arab and Islamic nations against the aggressors.

View from Academia

For lack of change

IN SOME ways, people in our part of the world are receptive to change; in some ways, our society as a whole is evolving at a reasonable pace, taking into account that it (our society) is, due to all sorts of crises (a favourite term with us) and setbacks, much like someone undergoing therapy and slowly being nursed back to health (this is the metaphor which many of us use). In other ways, they (people in our world) cling to old (and usually bad) habits so adamantly that you wonder whether we are moving fast enough to catch up with the rest of humanity, many of whose societies are evolving so rapidly you can't believe it (and in ways that count, too).

The other day, I was at a bank standing in line when I recognised a supermarket owner from my neighbourhood (I assume he is the owner because I see him often giving orders to the employees or engaging in loud arguments with them about how they ought to conduct themselves). He was depositing change in the bank. It was 10:30 a.m. Business as usual. Right?

Well not exactly. A couple of days earlier, I saw this same person handing back money to shoppers, stating in a firm, condescending, authoritative, and final tone (you know, the tone of those who want to sound important in your presence): give me change; I do not have change. A couple of buyers were explaining in the usual apologetic (and pathetic) way, that sorry, they did not have change on them, they spent it all paying the "service driver," the

baker, the butcher, the vegetable seller, the barber. "What can I do? Everybody wants change; where can I get you change?" he responded, as if the responsibility of providing change is theirs not his, and as if he were a department head at one of our civil-service establishments looking into charity petitions or inspecting a tax form, and not a businessman.

I left, determined not to buy anything from this individual (who is in fact not just one individual, but a type, a sample, a specimen, and a phenomenon in our society), not to contribute to his welfare and prosperity in any way (from his outer appearance, he seems to be doing well, financially and health-wise — healthy and wealthy (but, obviously, not wise), in the words of good old Benjamin Franklin), and never to return to his shop, unless the Gulf war erupts again and his is the only shop open — which I doubt, I mean I doubt that his shop will be open under such circumstances, not I doubt that the war will (may) erupt.

At the bank, he was handing the change (coins of all sorts and bills) to the teller. Why he was depositing the change in the bank so early in the morning (clearly the change he amassed from the previous day) and not saving any of it to use in his shop is beyond me. He was chatting with the teller, smiling, happy, content, polite, civil (though somewhat loud and pretentious) — as if this were not the same person I saw harassing customers so

obnoxiously and not the same person bossing around his employees so rudely.

I will spare you comments on the inherent contradiction (schizophrenia, even) in the very mentality, conduct, ideology, faith and ideals of many among us. I will also spare you comments about the absence of common sense in many of our dealings (is it really that difficult to keep some extra change handy so that cashiers use it when they run out of it?). And I will spare you comments on our lot and destiny in the tough days to come: the days of first-class customer service, competition, quality, distinction, etc. How can we compete with heroes (anti-heroes) like the person I have just described?

The anecdote I have told (and the many like it which we experience daily) speaks for itself. However, I cannot help but wonder how we are going to affect real change (reform, development, progress, etc.) if we do not have the sense and the means to provide enough change for our cashiers so that they stop harassing customers.

Try to buy a newspaper and hand the shopkeeper a one-JD bill. Most often, he/she looks at you like you have committed one of the seven deadly sins? Before we speak about change (reform, development, progress, etc.), or while we speak about it, let's talk about providing change first. This may be easier.

LETTERS

Stressing on accuracy

To the editor:

REFERENCE IS made to the article, "Activist's summons on slander charges highlights issue of pollution in Fuhais," (Jordan Times, Jan. 14, 1998).

In the first instance, I would like to point out that the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) has been involved in monitoring and assessment of suspended particulate levels in Fuhais since 1992.

The writer of the article should have investigated and validated the assertions and information provided by the interviewees regarding the accuracy of the results and the technology employed in place by RSS in monitoring air pollution in Fuhais. I stress that the equipment possessed by RSS to monitor air quality in Fuhais and elsewhere in the Kingdom is modern, sophisticated, and remarkably accurate. Such equipment is manufactured and used according to international standards and norms, and is presently utilised by environmental protection agencies worldwide.

Where future articles involving RSS activities are concerned, it is advisable and recommended that the writer contact the relevant department at RSS prior to publishing any information that could mislead or appear biased to the reader.

Dr. Said Alloush
 President
 Royal Scientific Society

'Scientific evidence'

To the editor:

I AM not usually in favour of commenting in the press on subjects which should be debated upon in scientific forums, as this practice tends to create confusion amongst readers rather than clarify the topic under discussion. However, as recently there has been a series of letters to the editor regarding the restoration of the entrance hall to the Umayyad Palace of Jabal Al Qal'a, an intervention of which I am in charge, I feel that it is necessary for me to make several points, especially as regards the document written by Dr. Alastair Northedge (Jordan Times, Dec. 29, 1997).

I understand that there may be discrepancies as to the decision to cover, protect and utilise the large entrance hall of the palace. Undeniably, architectural restoration work requires solutions of architectural design which are subject to criticism.

The fact that Dr. Northedge may disagree with a certain scientific theory is also understandable. Indeed, such discrepancies often favour scientific progress. However, what lacks scientific principle is the fact that Dr. Northedge chooses to question the scientific evidence which has been proven and confirmed by a number of different scholars, among whom are included Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, without even first bothering to confirm them personally in the monument where they are conserved "in situ." The sills of the windows discovered on the northern side of what was undoubtedly the starting point of the original dome may be seen from the terrace of the building.

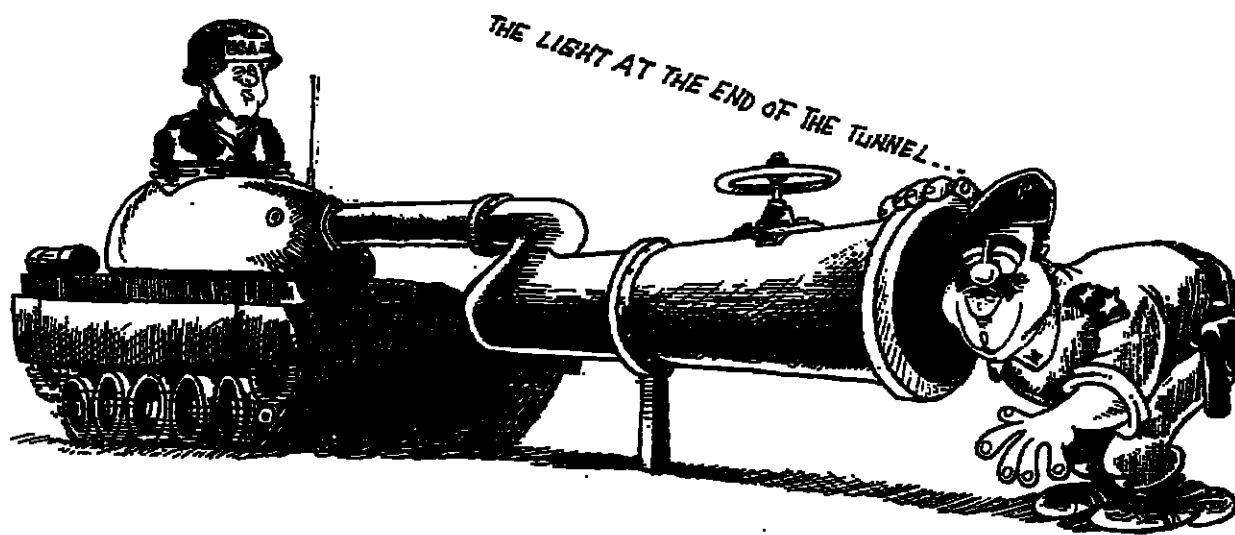
Regarding the proposal of covering the space with a plastic or glass roof, instead of with a wooden dome, it should be pointed out that said solution may not in any way be considered neutral or exempt from prejudices, as it would most necessarily promote the idea of an open space through which light could enter, which is precisely that which, contrary to evidence, is maintained by Dr. Northedge. This is precisely the solution which is adopted when covering a patio in order to preserve its essence. In this case, evidence points to the existence of an opaque cover which must have been a dome, which was likely made of stone, as are the two semicircular covering the two lateral spaces on either side of the hall.

The solution which has been adopted cannot be erroneous, as it involves the use of modern techniques which are entirely different from those which could have been used in the 8th century A.D. The objective is, therefore, to protect the building while promoting its utility, and finding the most plausible way to insulate the original construction. The project has been developed in a cooperation programme between Spain and Jordan whose objective is to promote Jabal Al Qal'a as a cultural and tourist centre in harmony with the great city of Amman.

It is comprehensible that Dr. Northedge may be concerned that his theories regarding the palace, such as that dealing with the different periods of its construction, which has been maintained despite our studies which have been completely confirmed through research that is about to be published, are groundless. However, that is the risk that one takes when theorising on subjects which others study more directly and with greater dedication. Theories which are launched without adequate supporting data are usually regarded unfounded.

Antonio Almagro
 Vice-Director of the School of Arab Studies
 CSIC, Granada, Spain

M. KAHIL



Bill and Saddam: The problems with bluffs

By Gwynne Dyer

IT ISN'T working, is it?

U.S. President Bill Clinton claims that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has enough chemical and biological weapons to wipe out the world twice over. Various critics reply that every garden centre contains enough lethal chemicals to wipe out a large city — if you could get everybody to take exactly one spoonful. The problem is distribution, and Saddam Hussein can't distribute.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Clinton's loyal sidekick, helpfully warns a joint press conference that Saddam Hussein is "an evil dictator", and reporters respond by asking where Clinton has been putting his member recently. They know what sort of leader Saddam Hussein is — the same one he was when he was a U.S. ally against Iran — but they know of no clause in the U.S. constitution that mandates U.S. presidents to rid the world of "evil dictators."

The U.S. government puts out reassuring statements about how precision bombing can get Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" without harming a hair on the head of a single civilian Iraqi. Whereupon General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of 'Desert Storm' in 1991, goes on NBC television and says that "we run the risk of doing the same thing we did to North Vietnam," where bombing was escalated endlessly without achieving either military or political goals. (And the North Vietnamese won, in the end.)

How Clinton must long for the 19th century, when

British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston would send a gunboat to chastise some wayward oriental potentate, and the whole British press would rally loyally around. Nobody would inquire if he had an "exit strategy." (He usually didn't, and it often ended up being a horrible mess, but at least it was fun in the early stages.)

One feels a certain sympathy for U.S. planners, because the impertinent mass media of the late 20th century have made the fine old diplomatic tool of bluff almost unusable. If a government has no viable strategy for victory and is hoping to win by mere bluster, various "experts" will soon be making that fact plain to the whole world.

So why are we on the brink of a very large aerial bombing campaign against Iraq? Because people running big, powerful countries like the United States simply cannot believe that their military power does not always enable them to coerce weaker opponents, and because it is human nature to bluff. Unfortunately, media questioning of unsound strategies is often countered by escalating government rhetoric about the scale of the threat and the need for a massive response. (Russian President Boris Yeltsin's recent remark that "Clinton is behaving too loudly" was right on the mark.)

In the end, the bluffers end up painting themselves into a corner with their tongues. That is where the U.S. government is now, and in order to save face it probably will start bombing Iraq. This is stupid, and nobody understands that more clearly than the man who repre-

sents the biggest Iraqi opposition group: Dr. Ahmed Chalabi, president of the Iraqi National Congress.

"Everyone says Saddam is boxed in," said Chalabi last week, "but it is the Americans and British who are boxed in by their refusal to support the idea of political change in Iraq. The consequences of that are disastrous. People should read Clausewitz: 'War is policy by other means.' But what is the policy here?"

What indeed? Simply bombing Iraq, without committing ground forces, offers little chance of getting the chemical and biological weapons Saddam Hussein may have hidden away, and no chance of overthrowing the dictator himself. Yet Washington has sworn not to use ground troops, and denied itself the goal of seeking Saddam's overthrow.

All the United States wants (so it says) is that Saddam Hussein let the arms inspectors of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) go anywhere in Iraq in order to track down and destroy his weapons of mass destruction. But if it won't invade, and it won't try to overthrow him, where's the pressure on him to comply?

"Military action alone will not remove Saddam," observed Chalabi. "It will not remove the weapons of mass destruction. It will give (Saddam Hussein) the excuse to throw out UNSCOM. And thousands of Iraqis will die. Saddam Hussein will make sure they will, so he can get sympathy."

The basic problem now is the same as in 1991. The U.S. State Department no longer treats Saddam

Hussein as a de facto ally (as it did during the war caused by his invasion of Iran in the 80s), but it still wants a strong and united Iraq as a bulwark against "revolutionary" Iran. Given the diverse ethnic and religious make-up of Iraq, Washington believes that Iraq's unity can only be preserved by a Sunni Arab dictator with military backing.

The United States would prefer an Iraqi military dictator who was less fierce than Saddam Hussein, and less apt to invade his neighbours — but if it can't be sure of replacing Saddam Hussein with another man just like him, another nicer, then it will stick with the devil it knows. Since Saddam Hussein knows all this too, it was foolish to try to bluff him, and now the price must be paid.

What would be the minimum price of a large-scale aerial campaign against Iraq? Saddam Hussein would be strengthened, the United Nations would be sidelined and humiliated, Arab regimes friendly to the U.S. would be seriously weakened, and Washington would end up with egg on its face. And, of course, a certain number of innocent Iraqis would be killed.

The maximum price could include: rejection of the SALT 2 Treaty (which seeks to control much more serious weapons of mass destruction) by a Russian parliament fed up with U.S. high-handedness; a protracted 'North Vietnam'-style U.S. air war against Iraq; the definitive end of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; and chemical or biological missiles on Riyadh and Tel Aviv.

And they know all that before they start.



Society on the move

Priorities take precedence

As this week came to a close, discussions in various settings began to pitch about the "impending" U.S.-led strike on Iraq.

In one setting, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali presented a lecture Wednesday night, at the World Affairs Council, following a meeting of its board of directors. Dr. Majali, who is also chairman of the council, briefed the board and other council members on the latest developments in the U.N.-U.S.-Iraq crisis following his own meetings on Tuesday with His Majesty King Hussein. The unpublicized lecture was held in a closed session.

THE DEBTE MAGNET: Political debate of the crisis was spiced as well at Al Herish Diwan, the central family home where Hamas representative Mohammad Nazal last week received condolences on the death of his father. There, a small group of mourners engaged in a discussion involving differing positions on the issue. Some were certain that Iraq would come under military fire by the U.S. and its allies, others said the crisis was simply a scheme to "re-polish" Saddam Hussein and to reinstate him as the "number one" Arab leader capable of defying the U.S. Drawn into the debate were Hussein Mjeh, head of Jordanian Bar Association, attorney Fays Nabulsi, former Hamas politburo head Dr. Musa Abu Marzouk, current politburo leader Khaleel Misha'al, Hamas spokesperson Ibrahim Ghosheh, and Mohammad Nazal himself, while hundreds of mourners gathered to pay their respects to the Nazal family.

OFF THE CHARTS: Rumblings about a Cabinet reshuffle quieted. In a week that even heard speculation about a new government being formed altogether, names such as former Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Kawabdeh, three-time former minister Ahmad Khleifat and Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi were surfacing as "possible candidates" for the seat of premier. As quickly as speculations in that arena were put on a back burner, so too was talk of a reshuffle. The more immediate issue of the Baghdad-Washington stand-off has upstaged all the talk of ministry combining, ministers in and ministers out, for the time being.

ONE MORE TIME FOR THE CAMERAS: Taking centre stage on Tuesday was the arrival to Amman of European Commission President Jacques Santer.



Crown Prince Hassan greets European Commission President Jacques Santer at the end of a press conference at Basman Palace on Tuesday. (Reuters photo)

of European Commission President Jacques Santer. Mr. Santer, who was in Jordan to discuss the EU's role in the region, was scheduled to arrive at Amman's Marka Airport from Tel Aviv at 9:30 A.M. Lo and behold, his plane touched down at around 8:30 A.M. No one was there to meet him, and possibly realising the situation, Mr. Santer waited. Forty-five minutes intermission, enter, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh and the ambassadors of the EU, the U.K., Christopher Battiscombe of the U.K., Bernard Bajole of France, and Francesco Cerulli of Italy, as well as the head of the European Commission Delegation in Jordan Yves Guizzo. A good sport, Mr. Santer, after pre-

liminary welcomes and apologies from his hosts, graciously played along to re-enact his arrival for the sake of television coverage. With all players in their places, it was lights, camera, action!

ON THE JOB: Two more Jordanian ambassadors have had their tenures extended. They are Shaker Beg, ambassador to South Africa, and Awad Abu Obeid, ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PORT OF CALL: Another official of the Arab Regional Authority has springboarded to a key post. ARA Secretary General Muzahem Muhaisen has been appointed secretary general of the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications. Candidates to replace him are said to include Royal Yacht Club Director Mohammad Balqaz, and Deputy Director of the Arab Maritime Bridge Company Akef Abu Tayeh.

PROMOTED: At the Natural Resources Authority, Kais Qaisi, an engineer who has been serving at the NRA's assistant director general, has been promoted to director general.

SPECIAL REQUEST: An Iranian parliamentary delegation arriving in Jordan next week has asked for arrangements to present public lectures. During their stay in the Kingdom they are scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi, Senate Speaker Zaid Rifai, House Speaker Saad Hayel Sana and other officials. Their proposed lectures are meant to elaborate on the new trends in Iran's policies since the election of President Muhammad Khatami.

SPLITTING AT THE SEAMS: Party politics predicts another major defection from the National Constitutional Party, headed by Abdul Hadi Majali, deputy from Karak. Following the earlier resignation of party chairman Akef Fayed, a senator, and last week's pull out of Abdul Raouf Kawabdeh, Lower House member from Irbid, observers say that now key party member Hakeem Khair may also jump ship. Should that happen, they say, the party which pooled together nine political parties under one roof, may well fragment into many more than the original nine.

Careful out there this weekend — it's Friday the 13th.

Jennifer Hamarneh

Testing programmes on 'guinea pigs'

By Jean-Claude Elias

HAPPY AS we may be, using these so-called friendly personal computers, we're probably too busy learning how to use them or fighting with them, to notice that the software industry is simply taking us for its guinea pigs.

Certain facts are hard to believe. This typical disclaimer by Corel can be found with their CorelDraw CD: "The programme is provided as is, without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. ... The entire risk as to the quality and performance of the programme is with you. Should the programme

prove defective, you (and NOT Corel or an authorised representative) assume the entire cost of all necessary servicing, repair or correction."

And we all, including the writer of this column, accept these terms. Microsoft, Lotus and virtually all software manufacturers display similar statements, preferably printed in microscopic characters, with their programme disks.

How do we, how can we accept such terms? Computer programmes are very important products. They do not only cost money when purchased, they also require precious

learning time and effort.

chip talk



The purpose they are used for is also dear to the users. Errors in software — bugs, as they are called — can therefore be very costly to us. The price we sometimes pay in lost productivity and wasted time cannot be estimated. And yet we bravely dive and do it again and again. Producing absolutely bug-free software has become very difficult if not impossible, given the huge size and the level of complexity

modern programmes have reached. Of course some bugs are less acceptable than others. Microsoft Windows 95 operating system for example is known to have minor bugs, but none that would prevent its main part from working smoothly.

The saddest part of the story is not the absence of warranties on software or the presence of bugs per se. It's that the industry, knowing the weakness of their products is counting on us

to test them, give their feedback and allow it to fix them. Whereas a number of PC users, mainly the computer professionals, are aware of this unusual situation, the vast majority has not the faintest idea of how it is being used. This majority trusts the goodwill of the manufacturers. Besides, PC users are known to be ready to do anything to get their hands on new software. It's an obsession and they just love it.

A no warranty disclaimer would never stop them. Some analysts argue that this is the only way software can progress. It must be tested by the largest possible number of users. One wonders, however, whether programmes that are not yet in their final, bug-free stage shouldn't be distributed free-of-charge. To say

the least, it appears as a monstrous contradiction that the industry that admits to selling products with flaws is the one that is reaping the biggest profits.

It must be said that software is first released in what is called a "beta" version, for users to try. This declared test version — i.e., with guinea pigs knowing they are being used — may contain some serious

bugs that would be totally unacceptable. Once these critical errors are corrected, the final version that theoretically should be completely bug-free, is released. Unfortunately very few, if any, so-called final versions of any programmes are truly clear of errors. This is precisely the main complaint of all guinea pigs.

Ministry readies for children's song festival

By Jumana Abu Hannoud
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Ministry of Culture recently invited Arab cultural attachés in Jordan to chart a strategy for the Fourth Arab Children's Song Festival, to be held in Amman Sept. 28 - Oct. 10 under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor.

Attachés from 12 Arab embassies attended the meeting, held early to ensure increased participation this year in contrast to previous lacklustre turnouts, organisers said.

According to festival director Wafa' Goussous the competition is open to adult participants from all Arab countries who are interested in writing songs targeting children in the pre-school age group.

She said the organisers preferred the songs to be written for this age group because one of the goals of the competition is to increase research and production in this field.

Ms. Goussous told the Jordan Times that entries should be sent in on a cassette tape, accompanied by the written lyrics and music. Around 150 local children will participate in

singing and dancing to the music, which will be played by the National Music Conservatory Orchestra.

A prize JD500 is awarded for the best Jordanian song and contestants with the winning songs receive cash prizes, she said. A trophy and a certificate are given in the name of the children.

"The songs from each country could preserve a regional flavour in order to provide variety in the competition," said Ms. Goussous. "The songs should be simple, standard, written in simple oriental and Arab musical chords in an attempt to keep children in touch with Arab identity and heritage."

She said that among the rules of the competition the songs should not fail to acknowledge the rights of girls under the umbrella of children's rights. They should also include general, national, social, educational and environmental issues concerning children.

The festival was first started in 1994 as a local show and developed in the following years to include other Arab countries in the form of a competition, added Ms. Goussous.

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- Good AutoCad skills.

4-Accountant

- University graduate.
- At least three years experience.

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Foreign investment in Israel jumps despite crisis in peace process

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Foreign investment in Israel jumped 44 per cent last year to \$3.9 billion, confounding predictions that the crisis in the peace process would scare investors from the country, an official said.

Direct investment in the form of foreign purchases of Israeli companies rose to \$1.8 billion last year from \$1.3 billion in 1996, said the official, providing figures ahead of their formal publication by the Bank of Israel next week.

Purchases of shares in Israeli firms on the New York or Tel Aviv stock exchanges rose from \$1.4 billion to \$2.1 billion over the same period, he said on condition of anonymity.

In Tel Aviv, total foreign stock holdings reached \$4.8 billion, 12 per cent of the market capitalisation.

The official said the foreign investment picked up pace during the second half of the year, leading forecasters to predict a further rise during the current year helped by falling inflation.

"The foreign interest is a sign of confidence in the Israeli economy," he said. Investors were most

attracted to Israel's high-technology sector, primarily electronics, computer software and Internet technologies.

According to official figures, Israel came in third behind Canada and Britain in the amount of money invested by U.S. capital risk funds which specialise in small high-tech companies. The funds invested \$143 million in Israel last year.

"The political situation has had almost no impact since most investments come from multinational companies which have made a strategic choice to invest in Israel," said Ilat Rosenblum, an official in the ministry of industry and trade.

"For small and medium-sized businesses on the other hand the poor state of the peace process could have a negative effect on investments in Israel," she said.

Among the more active foreign players in the stock market in Israel are major investment houses like Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, Goldman-Sachs and the French bank Societe Gen-

erale.

Companies which have established themselves in Israel or bought into local firms include Siemens and Deutsche Telekom of Germany, France's Danone and Publicis, Johnson and Johnson and Cylind of the United States, Canada's Northern Telecom and operations run by billionaire businessman George Soros.

The investment crush was fueled in part by a series of major privatisations in the banking sector, including a \$1 billion purchase by Jewish-American financier Ted Arison into Hapoalim, the country's biggest bank.

This year the government plans to shed more state firms, notably the telecommunications company Bezeq, which should continue to draw foreign interest despite a broader slowdown in domestic economic activity.

According to the Bank of Israel, the economy will grow by barely two per cent this year, down from 4.5 per cent in 1996 and six per cent per year in the early 1990's.

Arab fund lends Egypt \$20m

ABU DHABI (AFP) — An Arab fund created six years ago to support flagging inter-Arab trade agreed Wednesday to provide a loan of \$20 million to Egypt to finance commercial deals with other Arab states.

The Arab Trade Fund Programme (ATFP) said it signed the loan agreement with the Egyptian Al-Ahli Bank, which represents Cairo in the Abu Dhabi-based fund.

The credit will be used in financing around 85 per cent of commercial transactions between Egypt and other member states, it said in a statement.

ATFP has a capital of \$500 million, of which half was subscribed by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund and the rest by other regional financial institutions and banks.

Russia, Italy sign Fiat car deal

ROME (AFP) — Russian and Italian businessmen signed an agreement Wednesday under which Fiat will invest \$850 million and build 150,000 cars per year in Russia.

The deal with the Russian auto group Gaz was signed in the presence of Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi.

Fiat is the first Western industrial group to set up a production site in Russia, at Nijni Novgorod (formerly Gorky), 450 kilometres (275 miles) east of Moscow.

Gaz expects the Fiat investment to result in 4,000 jobs at the plant that will turn out Palio, Palio Weekend and Marea models — the latter to be produced as early as the end of this year.

Initially the cars will be built from parts imported from Italy, but plans call for all components to be manufactured at Nijni Novgorod.

Gaz, the Russian acronym for Gorky Automobile Factory, has since the demise of the Soviet Union become a joint-venture company, in which Moscow remains the majority shareholder.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's a good afternoon to go shopping, if you can find the energy. It looks like you'd rather just take off early on your weekend jaunt. That could prove more expensive than you'd planned. Better check on your motel reservations and other little details.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're able to learn more quickly than usual. Information just sticks to your brain. So study something your boss or professor has been trying to teach you. A loved one can help. He or she may not have complete mastery of the subject yet, but the insights will be priceless.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) It looks like you could pull off the deal of the century if you got insider information and tried something unusual. You might be able to wrangle an unconventional loan. If you don't have somebody helping you with a real estate deal, start investigating one. He or she will most likely be a Libra.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Handle business this morning. This evening, you're going to want to relax at home. A nice meal, good music and perhaps a soak in the hot tub will make this a memorable Friday night. If your sweetheart has other plans, let him or her go without you. An occasional absence does make the heart grow fonder.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Conditions are hectic this morning, but you'll get the most creative work done then. Meet with friends later in the day. A party would be a good way to relax and renew your energy. In fact, it's a good weekend to party, from tonight clear through Sunday.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your luck changes for the worse as your day progresses. There's a whole lot to do. Scan over your lists first thing this morning. Sort out those little pieces of paper in your pockets, too. A couple hours spent getting organised this morning could really save your bacon later in the day.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is easy, but don't get lazy. You're going to have to perform up to the standards you've already set for yourself. Better check your calendar again. If you miss this meeting, you'll be in trouble. It looks like there might be quite a bit of money involved.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You and your partner had better have a meeting this morning. You're going to have to shell out some money later in the day, so you need to agree on priorities. If either of you spends the money without the other's approval, it could make the mutual purchase impossible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Conditions for travel look excellent through Sunday. How long has it been since you and your sweetheart had a romantic cruise? If you can't afford the Princess line, a sailboat will do. If you can't even manage a rowboat, don't let that stop you. There's some sort of cruising you can do this weekend.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This weekend you'll be even more romantic than usual. If you don't have a sweetheart, consider somebody you've always thought of as a good friend. There might be a difference in your ages, but that's OK. It's the level of communication that counts.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You'd like to spend the whole day in fascinating conversation. Instead, you're going to have to take care of business. Consider the possibilities and make the best decision. It won't be easy, but it could bring you fame as well as fortune.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you push yourself hard this morning, you might get out early. It'll definitely be worth the effort. You work harder than three or four people most of the time, so why not allow yourself to relax harder than three or four people as well? Go for it.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Ask a Libra friend out to dinner. If you don't have a one, just ask the most attractive person you know. The combination of your sign and Libra is very complimentary. With your hyperactivity, you can both burn off those extra calories. Get out there and play!

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your boss or an older person is in a generous mood. Watch out for one who wants to pay you with advice instead of cash, though. Don't take any IOUs. Meanwhile, value your sweetheart's advice highly. He or she can give you something you're missing.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You can't find it when people beat around the bush. Today, all you'll have to do is ask! If you seem to be getting contradictory answers, don't back off. Just point that out and keep after it until you get the whole story. This could be very entertaining.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You'll have to stay on your toes to keep ahead of the action today. Instead of getting frustrated, offer some guidance. You can figure out what the objective is, and the best route to get there. In other words, you're the navigator. Don't sit there and be a passenger in life today.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you don't have a marvellous time today, it's your own fault. Everyone you know will be enjoying themselves. It's an excellent day for group activities and meetings. Keep people focused on the subject at hand. Even big changes will be easy with the conditions that are in effect right now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Information from a private source might not be right. The person who's passing along the gossip got it from somebody else, and you know how those things go. You're pretty good at dishing innuendoes yourself. So don't pass along any information you're not certain about. And don't pay much attention to anything you hear either.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're in for a very interesting day. Your competition has an advantage. Instead of getting into a fight you can win, go into the situation with hat in hand. If you take this stance in a confrontational situation, you'll win something valuable and make a good impression of the other person.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If you don't have any investments, it's time you got some. Things are changing all around you. That's all the more reason to think about your security. Focus on long-term goals today. Otherwise, you're liable to spend everything you've got on something you want now. Resist the temptation.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Somebody's trying to talk your ear off. He or she wants to sell you something. There's only one thing to keep in mind. If this item is going to bring you more money, it's good. If it's going to cost you more money, it's bad. Make that clear and you'll shorten the conversation considerably.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You may have to go farther than you expected to get what you want. If it's not available in the local store, try checking the catalogs. Actually, it may not even have been invented yet. Not to worry. Things are changing so fast that it'll probably be here soon.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There is change in the air. You're lucky, forceful and dynamic. You're also good-looking. So what have you got to worry about? Absolutely nothing! Make your life into what you've always wanted it to be. Toss out the whatever doesn't work and get on to whatever does. You know which is which.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're attractive to a person whom you find attractive. The two of you might be able to get together for lunch or dinner. The conversation you get into could have interesting side effects. Something that starts out as a friendship could easily develop into more.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Transmit
- Wise Men
- Seam suitable
- Dueling sword
- Norse Zeus
- Of sheep
- One's cronies
- Twenty
- Streetscars
- Use acid for art
- Moocall
- Small valley
- Down in the dumps
- Tripp in the bush
- Rhoda's TV mother
- Corday's victim
- and dined
- Area of the Atlantic
- The King
- Tale
- Pasture in poetry
- Ocean breeze
- Totality
- Gardener's tools
- Foldaway bed
- Bring to heel
- Borrower's opposite number
- Saudis and Iraqis
- Dine well
- For the birds?
- Do-overs separator
- Jason's gallery
- Narrates
- Diminutive ending
- Freddie's first partner
- Newly-hatched stage
- Power units
- Fiver
- Saxon
- U.S. Grant's opposite
- Brainstorms
- Band members
- Brook fish
- POW possibly
- la Douce

DOWN

- Brief time periods
- Cast-of-thousands pic
- Claudius nephew
- Court judgment
- One of the Stooges
- Brouhaha
- Talent
- Structure starter?
- Evaporates
- First name in daredevils
- Okay
- 500-mile race, for short
- Hardy heroine
- Permit
- Singer Diana
- Dressed (in)
- Israeli dances
- Psychic's sensations
- Freddie's first partner
- Newly-hatched stage
- Power units
- Fiver
- Saxon
- U.S. Grant's opposite
- Brainstorms
- Band members
- Brook fish
- POW possibly
- la Douce
- 47 Goes bed
- 49 Melville or Woolf
- 51 Close-fitting hat
- 53 Dancer Murray
- 54 Conversation
- 55 Speak incoherently
- 56 Depraved
- 57 Settlement
- 58 Pip-squeak
- 60 Dynamic starter?
- 61 Sacks
- 62 Blackthorn berry
- 64 Gate fig.
- 65 Lobster eggs

Peanuts

AND THEY SAY NO TWO SNOWFLAKES ARE EVER ALIKE...

THAT'S RIDICULOUS... I'VE SEEN FOUR ALREADY THIS MORNING THAT WERE EXACTLY ALIKE...

THEY WERE EVEN THE SAME COLOR!

Andy Capp

WHAT'S OUR PLAN FOR TONIGHT, PET?

AS THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW...

WELL... A FEW DRINKS, A GAME OF DARTS, AND IF CHARLIE AND RUBY ARE IN, MAYBE A POOL FOUR-SOME.

DESPITE THE COST OF LIVING, A PENNY FOR THIS BLOKE'S THOUGHTS IS STILL A FAIR PRICE.

Mutt'n'Jeff

7-9-3-1-2

THE NUMBER YOU HAVE DIALED IS INCORRECT. PLEASE HANG UP AND DIAL AGAIN. THIS IS A RECORDING.

7-9-3-1-2

THE NUMBER YOU HAVE DIALED IS INCORRECT. PLEASE HANG UP AND DIAL AGAIN. THIS IS A RECORDING.

I'LL DO IT REAL SLOW THIS TIME! 7-9-3-1-2

STUPID, WE DON'T HAVE NO SUCH NUMBER! LOOK IT UP AND TRY AGAIN! THIS IS A RECORDING!

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

"I need you to give me some good advice, so I wrote down exactly what you should say."

JUMBLE.

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Do you really like it?

RACHI

VEALE

MEECBO

NIGINN

Answer: HER

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumble: IMBUE, KEN, LIZARD, PURIFY

Answer: What the testing mechanics considered their coffee "BREAK" FLUID

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French qualifier puts out Maleeva

PARIS (AFP) — Emilie Loit, a French teenager ranked 234th who had to play in the qualifying event to get into the main draw, raised eyebrows at the Paris Indoor Open on Tuesday when she beat Bulgaria's Magdalena Maleeva in straight-sets.

The powerful 18-year-old left-hander from Cherbourg showed no respect for her experienced opponent's status as the world's 29th-ranked player and raced to a 6-0, 6-2 victory.

"I can't explain what happened," said a clearly shocked Maleeva after her defeat.

"Physically I'm fine and I played pretty well in Tokyo last week when I beat Anke Huber in the first round. But I found the court here much slower and I just couldn't get my timing."

"Obviously she's a good player — but that must be the worst match I have ever played. It is very disappointing since it was a match I shouldn't have lost."

Loit, who first attracted attention when she took a set off Spain's former Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez at the French Open last year, had never beaten a top-100 player before.

"Just getting into the main draw from the qualifying was an exploit in itself. It is fabulous to have got into the second round and to have beaten a player as good as Maleeva," she said.

In the qualifying tournament Loit defeated Britain's Samantha Smith and Karen Cross and compatriot Amelie Cocheteux. Earlier this month she won her first event since joining up with French Fed Cup coach Loic Courteau and fitness trainer Frederic Roche by triumphing at the Dinan clay-court Challenge.

She now plays compatriot and fourth-seed Nathalie Tauziat on Wednesday for a place in the quarter-finals.

Russian teenager Anna Kournikova, who just missed being seeded, swept past French wild card opponent Alexia Dechaume-Balleret 6-3, 7-5.

The 16-year-old, a 1997 Wimbledon semi-finalist who has risen to 27th in the rankings despite being restricted on the number of tournaments she can play because of her age, went off the boil at the start of the second set when she trailed 0-2 and 3-5. But she fought her way back with some lethal passing shots and

saved three set points.

Kournikova, whose two defeats in 1998 have been inflicted by the world's top-ranked players Martina Hingis and Lindsay Davenport, now faces either last year's finalist and fifth-seeded Anke Huber of Germany or another French wild card player Alexandra Fusai.

Battling 21-year-old 'lucky-loser' Sarah Pitkowski notched up a surprise win when she defeated 18-year-old left-handed French compatriot Anne Gaelle Sidot.

The red-haired Pitkowski, who has risen to 60th in the rankings since she started using a longer racket, ran down everything Sidot sent down to score a 6-4, 6-0 win and said that the success of top French players and France's Fed Cup victory last year was proving to be an inspiration to other home players.

The player from Lille, who came into the tournament when former World No. 1 Steffi Graf had to curtail her latest comeback attempt after straining a calf muscle on Sunday, admitted that she had nevertheless found it difficult adapting to the ultra slow surface.

"You seem to stick to it,"

she said, adding: "And when you stamp your feet it sounds terribly loud."

She didn't have to stamp her feet too much Tuesday — especially when Sidot clearly lost her concentration in the second set — to reach a second-round clash against eighth-seed Sabine Appelmans of Belgium.

Appelmans, a quarter-finalist in the tournament in 1994 and 1995, earlier scored her first win of 1998 when she beat Latvian qualifier Larisa Neiland.

The popular 24th-ranked Belgian left-hander, beaten in the first-round at both Sydney and the Australian Open this year, completed an easy 6-1, 6-3 victory.

Earlier, Appelman's sixth-seeded compatriot Dominique Van Roost finished with a flourish after dropping the second set to beat Barbara Schett of Austria 6-2, 4-6, 6-0. And Schett's seventh-seeded compatriot Barbara Paulus saw off Czech opponent Sandra Kleinova 6-3, 7-5.

Paulus now faces Silvia Farina of Italy who recovered from a shaky start to beat Denisa Chladkova of the Czech Republic 2-6, 6-2, 6-3.

JTTF names national team players to compete in Qatar tourney

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Four Jordanian table tennis players are currently preparing to take part in the 4th International Qatar Table Tennis Competition which will be held in Doha Feb. 23-27.

Iyad Maknay, Mustafa Rida, Tatyana Najjar and Alia Tufaha were chosen to participate in the Pro Tour event.

Some 20 other countries will be taking part, amongst them the strongest in the world, China, Sweden and Korea.

Although Jordan, currently ranked 67th and 91st in the world men and women's rankings respectively, are not hoping for great results, it will nevertheless, according to the

President of the Jordanian Table Tennis Federation (JTTF), Dr. Ismat Al Kurdi "provide valuable top-level match experience for the players."

The Federation assembled the Kingdom's best eight men and six women for 2 weeks during January to determine who would go.

The rankings were decided upon after several round-robin tournaments, in which each player played the other twice, and the total points were added up at the end.

A win is worth two points; in the event that two players are equal on points, their matches with each other are brought into the equation, and the player taking the most points off the other is ranked higher.

In the men's draw, Iyad Maknay topped the men through such calculation where four men shared points.

Ayman Maknay and Shawqi Dia just missed out.

In the women's half, Tatyana Naser reigned supreme with maximum points, leaving Alia Tufaha a distant second. Lina Majdalawi and Zeina Shaban just missed out.

Shaban has, at the tender age of nine, played herself onto the national team, and will henceforth be participating in the team's practices. She is preparing to go, independently of the JTTF, but with their blessing, to the Saffir International Table Tennis Tournament in Sweden, renowned for featuring some of the best players in Europe, where she will be competing in the Under-10's, Under-11's, Under-12's and Under-13's championships.

Blazers upset Lakers

PORTLAND — In Portland, Oregon, Isaiah Rider scored 16 of his 24 points in the third quarter as the Portland Trail Blazers built a 31-point fourth-quarter lead and held on to beat the Los Angeles Lakers.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 31 points for the Lakers.

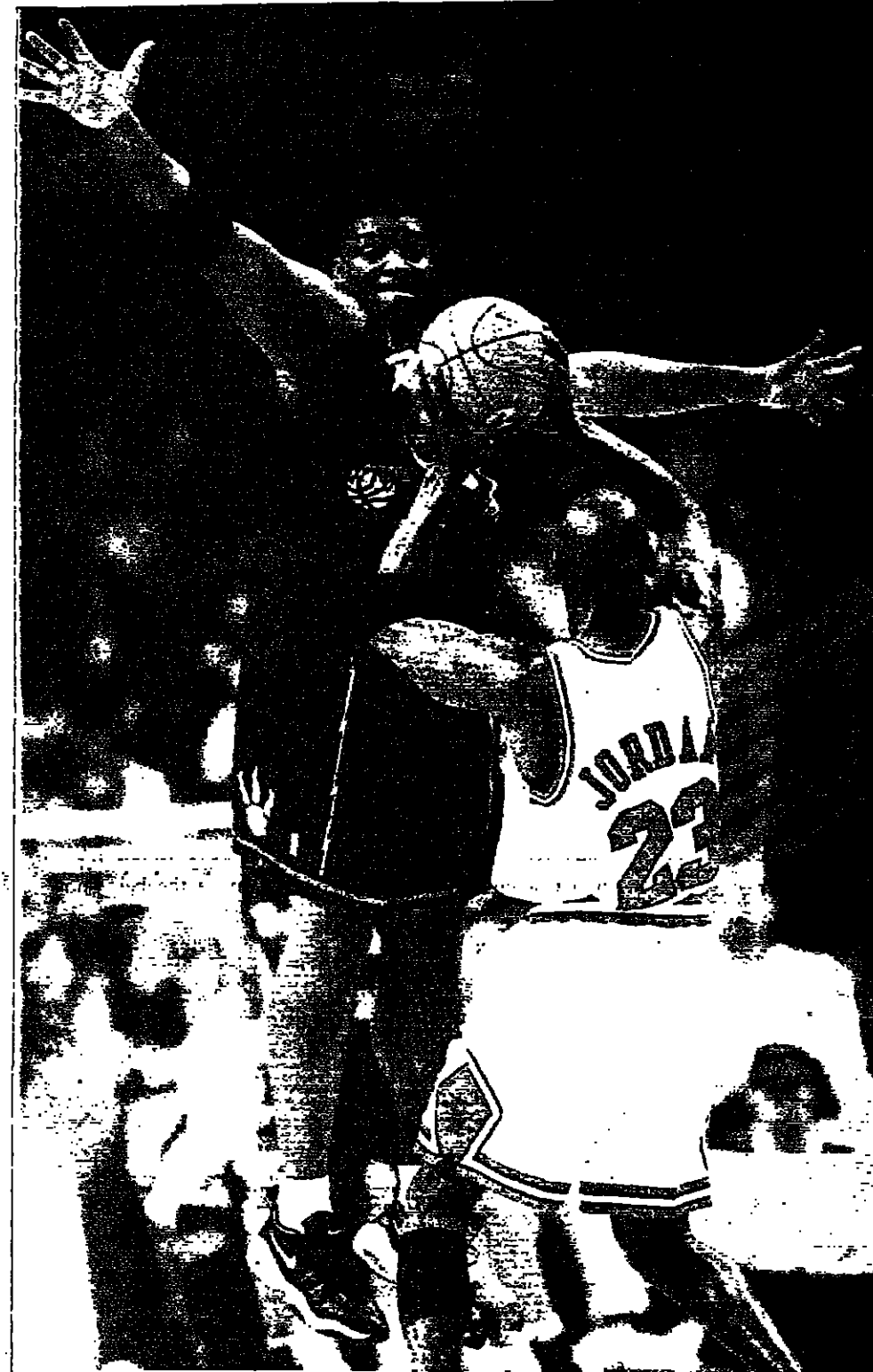
Kobe Bryant, voted to start the All-Star game despite coming off the bench for the Lakers all season, got his first start for Los Angeles and scored 15 points.

Wizards 99, Warriors 87: In Oakland, California, Tracy Murray scored a career-high 50 points to help the Washington Wizards overcome the absence of its top two scorers.

Murray's points were the most by an NBA player this season, one more than the 49 by Michael Jordan in a double-overtime game against the Los Angeles Clippers on Nov. 21 and by Boston's Antoine Walker against Washington on Jan. 7.

Murray, normally Washington's sixth man, finished 18-for-29 from the field, including five 3-pointers. He also made nine of 10 free throws.

Joe Smith's season-high 36 points led Golden State, which lost its 10th straight at home. Washington played without Chris Webber and Juwan Howard, who are injured.



Toronto Raptors' six-foot nine-inch, 325 lb. center Oliver Miller jumps up to block the path of Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan during second quarter action in Chicago (Reuters photo)

African Nations Cup Make or break for struggling Tunisia

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Highly-rated Ghana and outsiders Democratic Republic of Congo can clinch African Nations Cup quarter-finals places by winning Group B matches here on Thursday.

The Congolese face Tunisia at the Municipal Stadium during the afternoon while Ghana and Togo will relish the cooler evening conditions when they meet at the August 4 Stadium.

Ghana, champions a record four times and among the title favourites here, and 1996 runners-up Tunisia were expected to encounter little difficulty from poorly-prepared Congo and off-form Togo.

These predictions could still come true in the sweltering Burkina Faso capital although the pressure is on the Tunisians, who cannot afford another

lacklustre performance after falling 2-0 to Ghana on Monday.

Congo, helped by two controversial decisions from Moroccan referee Said Belgoba, defeated Togo 2-1 through a couple of penalties converted by Belgian-based striker Tondelua Mbulua.

The first spot kick was harshly awarded when Togo defender Massamesso Tchangaï touched the ball rather than the man and Congo goalkeeper Nkombe Tokala escaped unpunished after handling outside his area.

Tunisian coach Henri Kasperczak was concerned before the biennial 16-nation cup began about the elevation of his team to a place among the favourites as the North Africans often do better when written off.

A usually tight defence was ripped apart by the speed and skill of Ghana, and the result could have been even worse had Mohamed Gargo not struck a penalty kick so tamely that Ali Boumnijel blocked it.

Only shaven-haired Hassan Gabssi on the right wing impressed in attack for Tunisia with Mehdi Ben Slimane and veteran Ziad Tlemcani, an ineffective strike force.

Ghana, superbly led by inventive midfielder Abedi 'Pele' Ayew, were the most impressive of the 16 teams in the opening games and Togo goalkeeper Wake Nibombe, who plays for Ghanaian club Goldfields, must fear the worst.

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Ticket price: JD 5

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- The Royal Cultural Center, tel. 5669026
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 5687620

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Majorca reach last-four

MADRID (AFP) — A 68th minute goal from Yugoslav striker Jovan Stankovic gave Majorca a 1-0 victory over Athletic Bilbao on Tuesday and put the home side into the semi-finals of the Spanish Cup competition for the first time since 1981. The first-leg of the quarter-final clash had ended in a 2-1 Bilbao victory, but although the aggregate score was 2-2, Majorca went through on the away-goals rule. For over an hour it looked as though Bilbao would weather the storm — their defenders staying rock solid in the face on non-stop Majorca attacks. But Stankovic, who finally managed to get round Julien Guerrero, unleashed a tremendous drive from 25 metres which slammed into the back of the net after being deflected by a Bilbao defender. It left goalkeeper Imanol Etxeberria no chance. Luis Fernandez' side immediately threw everybody forward and they might well have saved the night when midfield powerhouse Inigo Larrañzar let loose a powerful drive which nearly had the home side's Argentinian goalkeeper Roa beaten. The other Spanish Cup quarter-final return-leg clashes will be played on Wednesday and Thursday.

Laudrup wants to play Gullit way

LONDON (AFP) — Danish star Brian Laudrup, who is set to leave Scottish champions Glasgow Rangers at the end of the season, said here on Wednesday that he was keen to play for Chelsea coach and Dutch master Ruud Gullit. The 28-year-old winger, formerly at Serie A side Fiorentina, said although flattered by overtures from Dutch giants Ajax Amsterdam he was not interested in playing for the same club side as his elder brother Michael. "I am very interested in the way Ruud Gullit wants to utilise me and how he wants the team to play," Laudrup junior said. "I believe my style of play would be more suited to Chelsea," he added. The twice-crowned Scottish player of the year had been a target of Manchester United and Ajax before the start of this season but he agreed to stay on at Rangers for another season as they chase a record 10th successive championship. Laudrup joined Rangers four years ago after playing for a succession of top clubs — Bayern Munich, Fiorentina and AC Milan — and has become a firm favourite with the fans.

| | | | | | | | |
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Snowboarder stripped of Olympic gold over drug failure

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Russian deputies' aid plane arrives in Baghdad

YEREVAN (AFP) — A Russian plane loaded with humanitarian aid and chartered by Russian nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy arrived in Baghdad Wednesday after a three-day delay to wait for U.N. authorisation.

The plane had been stranded at Yerevan airport following U.S. moves to block the flight to sanctions-hit Iraq.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy hit the headlines again Wednesday, striking the Russian ambassador to Armenia in the face Wednesday in a row over his much-delayed flight to Baghdad.

The leader of the extreme

nationalist Liberal Democratic Party lost his

Zhirinovskiy strikes Russian envoy

cool after being stranded in the Armenian capital Yerevan since Sunday awaiting U.N. clearance for the flight to the Iraqi capital, journalists said.

The incident occurred when Mr. Zhirinovskiy tried

to get 50 people aboard the plane carrying aid supplies to Iraq, instead of the 30 authorised late Tuesday by the U.N. Sanctions Committee.

"When the Russian ambassador [Andrei Urnov] tried patiently to convince him to give up the attempt, he [Zhirinovskiy] insulted him," a journalist from Russia's RTR television said.

"And when the ambassador publicly rebuked him, Zhirinovskiy struck him in the face," the journalist said, adding that journalists who filmed the exchange had their film confiscated. The plane took off

Wednesday for Baghdad with Mr. Zhirinovskiy, around a dozen Russian lawmakers and 15 Russian journalists.

The incident is not the first time Mr. Zhirinovskiy has come to blows with those who have stood in his path.

The voluble party leader struck a woman deputy during a parliamentary session, threw a flower pot at journalists in the French city of Strasbourg, and hurled a glass of orange juice at Boris Nemtsov during a televised debate, before the young reformer Mr. Nemtsov became a first deputy prime minister.

Russia urges Turkey not to let U.S. use airbase against Iraq

ANKARA (AFP) — Russia on Wednesday called on Turkey not to allow the United States to use an allied airbase in Turkish territory for possible air strikes against Iraq.

"Russia appreciates the Turkish position which is in favour of political and diplomatic methods in finding a solution to the Iraqi crisis," the Russian ambassador in Ankara, Vadim Kuznetsov, said in an interview with AFP.

"We hope Turkey will maintain this position and continue to abstain from allowing its territory to be used for any unilateral use of force against Iraq without proper decisions of the U.N. Security Council," Mr. Kuznetsov said.

A U.S.-led multinational force made extensive use of the Incirlik airbase in southern Turkey in striking Iraqi targets during the 1991 Gulf war.

But in the latest crisis, Turkish officials have voiced reluctance at letting the U.S. again use Incirlik for offensive purposes against Iraq.

Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz has said that if the United States formally requests Incirlik's use against Iraq, it would be up to the Turkish parliament to decide on the matter.

Foreign Minister Ismail Cem met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad last week and asked for Baghdad's full compliance with U.N. resolutions on weapons inspections.

In Baghdad, Mr. Cem also held talks with an envoy of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who is spearheading efforts for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

President Yeltsin said Tuesday during a visit to Rome that Russia would send a "very strong" message to Mr. Hussein demanding he comply with the U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Kuznetsov said President Hussein has recently been showing signs of compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions on U.N. inspections of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

"The United Nations should deal with Iraq not only on weapons inspections, but also on the lifting of the sanctions" once the Iraqi leader complies with the resolutions, he said.

Turkey, which says its economy was badly hit due to severed trade with Iraq after the Gulf war, also favours the lifting of the U.N. sanctions on Baghdad as soon as possible.

"The positions of Russia and Turkey are quite close on this

crisis and we are in constant contact, informing each other of initiatives and evaluations," Mr. Kuznetsov said.

Fearing that U.S. air strikes on Baghdad could cause a fresh refugee influx toward its border, Turkey is preparing to take measures inside neighbouring northern Iraq, according to government officials.

More than 500,000 Iraqi Kurds massed near the Turkish border in fear of retaliation by Baghdad troops following a failed Kurdish rebellion in the wake of the Gulf war.

The Turkish government, which fears the exodus might be repeated, could set up tent cities and distribute intensive humanitarian aid in the military's coordination inside Iraq in the event of a refugee influx, sources said.

Some media reports that thousands of Turkish troops have already entered northern Iraq in a fresh incursion have been denied by Turkish officials.

However, Turkey, which has made frequent incursions into northern Iraq to fight separatist Kurds in recent years, is already believed to be keeping around 5,000 troops there since the latest operation in September and October.

Protesters burn U.S., Israeli flags in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Some 100 protesters from various Muslim countries burned the U.S. and Israeli flags here Wednesday in a sign of solidarity with Iraq in its standoff with the United Nations over disarmament.

The demonstrators, who protested in front of the U.N. office in downtown Baghdad, also called for a holy war against the United States and Britain.

The protest was organised by the International Islamic Peoples' Congress, a forum created by Iraq in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq war, and which has been meeting here since Monday.

"A holy war against the United States and Britain has become the duty of every Muslim," said Nader Assaad Bayoudh Al Tamimi, spokesman of the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad Beit Al Maqdas, who participated in the demonstration.

"Their interests must be attacked, whether someone using a bomb does it or someone using a stone, because there must be no silence in the face of injustice," he said.

The United States and Britain have threatened to use force against Iraq if Baghdad does not give U.N. arms inspectors unconditional access to all its suspected weapons sites.

Iraq has been under U.N. sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, with their lifting tied to inspectors confirming Baghdad has no weapons of mass destruction.

Garaudy says support growing

DUBAI (R) — Roger Garaudy, the French Muslim writer on trial in a Paris court for trivialising the World War II Holocaust against Jews, said on Wednesday that support for his cause extended beyond the Islamic World.

"There has been wide support among Arab and Muslim nations... I have also been invited to visit Chile and Kerala in India, which means we are going beyond the Muslim World," he said.

The French intellectual was speaking at a news conference during a visit to the United Arab Emirates, one of several countries in the Middle East where there has been a public show of support for him.

Mr. Garaudy, 84, who denies any wrongdoing, was brought to trial after several anti-racism groups accused him of denying crimes committed against humanity, itself a crime under French law, in his book "The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics."

He has argued that Hitler's killing of the Jews amounted to "pogroms" or "massacres" but that it was an exaggeration to call the Nazi crimes "genocide" or "Holocaust."



THE ANCIENT HEAD: The head of Amenophis III, an Egyptian pharaoh from 1425 B.C. dominates an exhibition organised by the British Museum in Bombay Wednesday. The exhibition, which opens to the public today features 332 ancient artifacts from Greece, India, Egypt, Japan and the Sumerian civilisation and has cost about one million British pounds to display. The exhibition is an Indo-British project organised to commemorate fifty years of Indian independence from British rule (Reuters photo)

Algeria steps up attack on fraud, officials jailed

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria on Wednesday announced it was stepping up its war on corruption and fraud, and gave details of senior officials being sent to jail or awaiting trial.

"The fight against corruption... is going to accelerate and the fallout in the medium term can only be beneficial for the country's economy," said the government newspaper Al Moudjahid.

Many of the country's 29 million people have blamed corruption and the apparent impunity of officials for a lack of confidence in the government and state institutions.

Coinciding with the newspaper statement, the official news agency APS reported a range of jail sentences imposed on accountants, government and other senior officials.

In one, a court in Bouira, southeast of Algiers, jailed an accountant for 10 years for embezzlement at an apprentice training centre.

In Mostaganem, in the northwest, the director of the state refrigeration company was jailed for seven years, and two other officials for four years and 18 months respectively. They were all found guilty of

10 dead in Algeria attack

ALGIERS (AFP) — Ten people were killed and three wounded Wednesday in an attack at Telagh, near Sidi Bel Abbes in western Algeria, the security services said.

The victims were riding a vehicle when they came under attack from an armed group, they said, adding that efforts were under way to track down the gunmen.

Sidi Bel Abbes is 65 kilometres inland from the Algerian's main western port city of Oran, on a main road leading to Morocco.

Local newspapers had reported earlier that seven Islamists had been killed by security forces while two

civilians have been murdered in the past few days.

"Seven Islamists have been killed by security forces while two civilians have been murdered in the past few days, Algerian papers reported on Wednesday.

Five armed Islamists were killed on Tuesday at Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdes, east of Algiers, the daily Liberte reported.

Two more were killed on Sunday near Bentatla, in the southeast outskirts of the capital, the daily Al Khabar said. The paper also reported that a veteran of the independence war had been shot dead on Tuesday near his home in Tebessa.

APS detailed other sentences ranging from 12 months to six years handed out to officials for embezzlement, and orders to detain several other senior officials in custody to await trial.

Al Moudjahid said "there is a strong political will to attack head-on this scourge which is a gangrene in society, in companies, administrations, whose authors... act with total impunity."

The comment followed a statement on state-run television on Tuesday that Prime Minister Aïmeur Ouyahia had sent instructions for a crackdown to the ministers of justice, finance, the interior and trade.

Iran president pledges rule of law on revolution anniversary

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tens of thousands of people took to the streets here Wednesday, braving cold and heavy snow, to celebrate the 19th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and hear President Mohammad Khatami pledge the rule of law.

Mr. Khatami, in an unusually brief speech in Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square, where the crowd converged, also voiced his loyalty to the principles of the 1979 revolution which toppled the pro-American Shah.

"The revolution opened a new door to our people who had suffered from 150 years of despotic rule and colonialism," he said. "The presence of people on such a cold and snowy day is a sign of your enthusiasm for the revolution."

He did not directly refer to the United States, but scorned that country's efforts to pressure the Islamic Republic through sanctions.

"It is because of your political presence that we have been able to withstand all the pressure and make the enemy admit today that all its sanctions were ineffective," he said

as some in the crowd shouted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

Mr. Khatami later briefly marched with the crowd, a habit which has become his hallmark as a "president of the people" since he took office in August.

A group of young people playfully set fire to an effigy of an "evil" American character, but the event led to a scuffle as an organiser began to whip the crowd with a string to keep them under control.

The crowd, including many children and babies in strollers, was in a joyful mood despite unusually heavy snow, although most of those from poor families, which make up the regime's main popular base, were under-dressed for the cold weather.

Several children playfully slipped down snow-covered slopes in the middle of the square as street peddlers displayed sandwiches, snack and balloons for sale.

Loudspeakers blasted revolutionary songs and large portraits of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and

his predecessor, the founder of the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, decorated the walls.

"This is a national event for us. We feel great about it," said a police constable, who nevertheless complained about having had to stand guard in the cold weather since dawn.

There were also large groups of schoolboys and girls holding placards painted with revolutionary slogans and wearing green and red head-bands to symbolise their desire to die for Islam.

They were nevertheless in a peaceful mood and showed enthusiasm for the Western journalists present.

"I am very optimistic about our new president, because he will not divert from the path of Islam and the leader," said Rafi Feizian, a student of theology at Imam Jafar Sadeq University. "Some people may misinterpret the situation, but he wants to aim for a stronger spirituality in our country," he said.

The student was referring to some Orthodox circles who fear Mr. Khatami may depart from the revolutionary line.

Yeltsin declares love for Rome, Italian women

ROME (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin, on a visit to Rome to promote closer ties between Russia and Italy, has declared his love for Italian women.

"Allow me to confess my boundless love for the capital of your country, for Italy and for Italian women," Yeltsin, who was accompanied on the three-day trip by his wife Naina, said at a state banquet hosted by Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. "During this visit I have come to understand the prophetic words of Gogol, who wrote: 'You fall in love with Rome slowly, little by little — but it lasts your whole life.'"

Trial lawyers high in testosterone

ATLANTA (R) — Trial lawyers have significantly higher levels of testosterone than those in other areas of the law, said a psychologist who has studied how the male sex hormone affects human behaviour. Professor James Dabbs said in a study to be published this month that lawyers as a group do not have especially high levels of testosterone. But trial lawyers do — about 30 per cent more than those who stay out of the courtroom. Dabbs said high levels of testosterone are associated with dominance, persistence and focused attention. The hormone is often linked in studies to antisocial behaviour and competition.

First gay rugby team formed in New Zealand

WELLINGTON (AFP) — An exclusively homosexual rugby team is being formed here to show "it's okay to be gay" in the macho New Zealand rugby world, an organiser said Tuesday. "We want to show that it's okay to play rugby and be gay — and that it's okay to be gay and play rugby," said Dean Knight. "Some people in our community are uneasy about gay rugby players," he said. "They think we might be buying into the straight community's values. But we have a very diverse gay community. There are people who are into the macho-type rugby thing and I think we should provide for them too."

Hong Kong monks squeezed out of marketplace

HONG KONG (R) — Even Buddhist monks can fall foul of the marketplace in Hong Kong — cheap labour in the form of monks from China is taking their livelihoods away. From beating drums and reciting sutras to praying at funerals, local monks are being squeezed out by an influx of brethren who charge less, the South China Morning Post said. "It's fair that they're complaining — they have a right to," a source at the Po Lin Monastery told the newspaper. But an employee of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association said: "grumbling was inappropriate for monks. 'Monks shouldn't complain about money,'" said Lee Yee-Wai.

Queen Elizabeth sacks her hairdresser

LONDON (AFP) — Queen Elizabeth II abruptly sacked her personal hair stylist after three years of loyal service, an industrial tribunal heard on Tuesday. Stylist Paul Burgess, was paid \$160 a week to travel from his salon in Cheltenham to Buckingham Palace to do the queen's hair, until he was given his marching orders in July last year. Burgess' managing director, Vicky Schaverien, told the tribunal: "I was asked by the queen to tell him he was no longer needed." The hairdresser was shocked to be dismissed.

PNA bans pro-Iraq demos

NABLUS (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) forced the cancellation Wednesday of pro-Iraq rallies in the West Bank after Israel issued sharp protests over the demonstrations.

Azmi Ashubhi, the head of the committee organising pro-Iraq demonstrations in the West Bank, said "all rallies in Palestinian areas have been cancelled to avoid any possible embarrassment to the Palestinian Authority."

The decision led to the cancellation of one rally planned for Wednesday in Hebron and a second scheduled for Thursday in Nablus.

"We were informed by the governor's office that the demonstration had been prohibited," said Shaker Saad, one of the organisers of Thursday's rally in Nablus.

Israel issued sharp protests to the PNA after a series of pro-Iraq rallies in recent days during which demonstrators

burned U.S. and Israeli flags and called on Iraq to attack Israel.

Israeli press reports said the United States had also protested over the demonstrations, which came as Washington was seeking the support of Arab and other governments for the use of military strikes against Iraq.

There was no Palestinian confirmation of any U.S. pressure.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials charged that the rallies were organised with at least the tacit support of the PNA.

Mr. Netanyahu said Tuesday night that the pro-Iraq demonstrations called into question the Palestinians' desire for peace with Israel.

The chief of the Palestinian police, General Ghazi Jabali, said on Monday that permits

would be refused for any demonstrations "that lead to violence and disturbances."

"Anybody who wants to organise a demonstration has to have a permit, which will be issued on condition that there will not be any flag burning and that protesters will stay away from Israeli roadblocks and not damage public property," he told AFP.

In the Gaza Strip, however, a pro-Iraq group said it would go ahead with three indoor meetings in support of Iraq scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Mr. Netanyahu met with several of his ministers Wednesday to discuss Israeli fears that Palestinian activists could riot in the event that the United States carries out threats to lead air strikes against Iraq in the conflict over U.N. weapons inspections, Israel Radio reported.

Netanyahu's policies could lead to a disaster worse than anything before Israel's groundbreaking peace moves with Palestinians in Madrid and Oslo in 1991 and 1993.

Mr. Barak said he believed a nearly year-long deadlock in peacemaking talks between Mr. Netanyahu and the Palestinians was leading towards war.

"We are heading towards war. We are heading toward a major disaster. By heading the peace process into a deadlock, we won't just step back to square one of Oslo, Madrid. We might be thrown back a generation with a major eruption of violence," he said.

Barak ready for Palestinian state

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli opposition chief Ehud Barak said on Wednesday he would accept a Palestinian state within security limits agreed upon by Israel and the Palestinians.

"If they decide that they will have a Palestinian state, they will have a Palestinian state. It's up to them. It's not Netanyahu's problem. It's not my problem. It's their problem," the Labour Party chairman told American Jewish leaders.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rightist Likud Party rejects the establishment of a Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza Strip lands occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war. Labour's platform neither

embraces nor rejects the concept.

"If they want a Palestinian state, they will have it. The only limitation is that they should build it beyond the borders agreed upon and within security limitations agreed upon," Mr. Barak said when asked his vision of a Palestinian entity.

"If we cannot go ahead with physical separation, we will end up with renewal of terrorism under tougher circumstances and with a Belfast or Bosnia type of situation here," said Mr. Barak, who took over Labour from Nobel laureate Shimon Peres in June.

Mr. Barak, a former army chief who was foreign minister under former Israeli Prime Minister Peres in 1995-96, said Mr.